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Outlandish: A Human History of Violence in the Galapagos A Historical Non-Fiction Novel

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OUTLANDISH: A HUMAN HISTORY OF VIOLENCE IN THE
GALAPÁGOS
A HISTORICAL NON-FICTION NOVEL

by

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ABSTRACT

This historical non-fiction novel aims to relate the events concerning the settlement of Floreana Island in the Galápagos Archipelago in the early 1930's by European ex-pats. The events related are entirely based in fact, informed by the accounts of a variety of different sources with personal knowledge to the events. The style of the piece is influenced by the storytelling techniques of the fiction novel, with the narrative being primarily presented in the limited third person perspective of Dore Strauch, the protagonist of the story. The objective of *Outlandish* is to communicate a factual account of the human violence (carried out on both the island and on other humans) brought to Floreana as the result of foreign colonial influence on the island, as well as to present the historical facts of the events in a closer-focused novelistic style.

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CHAPTER 1

PROLOGUE

“Madness is something rare in individuals — but in groups, parties, peoples, and ages, it is the rule.”

—Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*

“You never see the animal in man ... and yet there lies the root of every evil.”

—Friedrich Ritter, “Adam and Eve in the Galápagos”

1820. Charles Island, Galápagos Archipelago

Thomas Chappel stood on a dry ridge crowded with the twisting boughs of gray and white speckled matazarno trees and stared down onto Post Office Bay. His ship the *Essex* floated low in shallow port, shrouded by the mists that accumulated between the islands. He was one of three boatsteerers—or harpooners—on the modestly-sized whaler, which was nearing the midway point of a lengthy, two year journey across the South Pacific that had begun in a squall off the coast of Nantucket in August of 1819. Fishing had been poor in the crowded summer waters of Cape Horn, so the novice Captain Pollard turned the ship northwest towards newly discovered whaling waters, known as the *offshore ground*, hoping for a more fortuitous haul. Charles Island, a tiny postage stamp of volcanic rock isolated at the bottom of the Galápagos archipelago, was to be the crew's last stop before heading over twenty-five-hundred nautical miles into the open Pacific in search of sperm whales. It was October of 1820.

Below, men moved in and out of four small whaleboats as they darted between the *Essex* and the cluttered shoreline. Fifty Galápagos Tortoise bellies covered the sand of the beach, the great wrinkled bodies of the defeated beasts lolling uselessly over the sides of their shells. They were lined up in the bloody surf to be dragged upside-down onto the floorboards of whaleboats and added to the near three hundred reptiles already swelling the bowels of the *Essex*. Chappel and his hunting party had ten more lashed to oars like dying men on stretchers, resting across the bent shoulders of his tired sailors. A young man, too small to hold up his end of an oar, followed behind—dragging one of the smaller tortoises on its shell by a length of leather strap. He was the cabin boy, Thomas Nickerson, a sensitive type it seemed to Chappel, but the year at sea had straightened him out a bit. He liked the lad well enough—even if he was one of those insufferably arrogant, quaker Nantucketers. They caught one another's eye, Thomas sweating underneath a mess of tangled, unwashed hair as he caught the reptile's flailing foot on something hidden by the high, sharp grasses.

“Get that Terrapin to the beach alive, boy,” Chappel said. “You don't want to see what men can do on a whaling vessel what's food stores have spoiled.”

“Don't see you lugging one about,” Thomas muttered.

Chappel aimed a swipe with his leather strap at the back of Thomas's head but intentionally missed wide. The boasterer chuckled to himself and let the matter go. The boy dragged the tortoise down onto the driftwood dunes and into the shadows cast by torches speared at odd angles into the stained sand of the beach between the squirming mass of terrapin. The cabin boy seemed to be losing his nerve after all this time on the islands: seven days on Hood Island for ship repair, followed by twice that on Charles

spent combing the windy landscape for tortoises could test the patience of even the most seasoned whaler. Could test the patience of Chappel himself. Whaling is a man's endeavor, noble even—a hunt of one thousand miles over unforgiving sea to spit in the great, empty eye of Earth's mightiest creatures and to return home its master. This tortoise business though—it felt like stealing children.

Besides, boatsteerers were paid a lay, or percentage per weight of whale oil; the longer the whaling voyage the less valuable the lay for each member of the crew.

Finding himself alone, bored, and without a way to communicate his frustrations concerning the ship's delays, Chappel recalled Captain Pollard's hysterical lectures concerning fire safety. The man was near-fanatical on the subject. So, against all logical or reasonable sense—perhaps out of some dark sense of schadenfreude at the potential panic of his fellow whalers—Chappel withdrew an oil-cloth containing his tobacco and tinderbox, which held inside his flint and steel and bits of char cloth. Leaving the tobacco, he set to work striking the steel into the char and nursing the flame onto the dried grasses and natural kindling of the tangled acacia limbs broken by the careless trudging of sailors. It was the dry season, and his flame had no trouble finding purchase among the brittle flora skirting the edge of the coastal sands. The boatsteerer laughed aloud at the thought of Captain Pollard's round face when he saw what would appear from the *Essex* to be his hunting camp engulfed by flames, burning next to the ancient hogshead mail barrel for which the bay was named.

By the time Chappel reached the beach, the brush fire he'd set just a few hundred feet inland had already jumped to the dead husks of carpetweed and mangrove, which crept towards the shore from the more elevated parts of the island like a gnarled, wooden

tide. The boatsteerer joined his fellow sailors in the shallows with the laborious business of hefting the great tortoises from the sand into the whaleboats before any were the wiser to his prank.

The cabin boy, Thomas, was hanging half over the side of one of the boats, a juvenile tortoise squirming in his thin arms while Chappel forced its rump out of the water, when a shout of “Fire!” came from out in the bay. The *Essex* had caught sight of his prank, and had set upon the whistle normally reserved for whale sighting on the open sea. Chappel turned to glance over his shoulder at his efforts, only to see a fiery maelstrom spitting and leaping its way up the beach towards the camp.

“Fire,” he shouted. “Brush-fire at the beach!”

Other men's shouts joined his, and whaleboats began pushing off from shore—some absent of any terrapin flesh whatsoever. Sailors clambered over the sides of the three craft as the flames jumped across a narrow, packed-clay path leading inland from the hogshead. Ashore, amongst the cracked carpetweed, crewmen fled the fire—some buckling belts and holding trousers to their waists even as they ran through the wind-whipped flames that were fast surrounding the camp.

The last man was pulled into a whaleboat as the fire reached the mass of stranded tortoises, the heat—which Thomas hid from amongst the reptilian flesh lining the bottom of the boat—licked at their exposed bellies. The terrapin squirmed on their shells, some managing to rock themselves in a reverse pendulum upon the sand in panic of the flames, though Chappel could not watch to see if any escaped the conflagration. He turned his eyes upon the *Essex*, already wincing at the angry barking of his Captain cursing the sailors for fools at the disaster. Chappel glanced at the boy cowering at his feet in the

boat, willing his silence of the act if indeed he had any ideas as to the origin of the flames.

The crew of the whale ship *Essex* rocked amongst their little boats in choppy afternoon seas, the sounds of splitting wood and screaming animals fleeing the beaches following in their wake.

The next morning, after nearly a full day of sailing west for the offshore grounds, Chappel emerged from below deck to begin his watch in the rat lines. The boatsteerer he was replacing paused before heading down to his bunk to stand at his shoulder and gaze back at Charles island, now completely engulfed in fast-moving flames with a towering column of dry wood smoke casting a shadow over the very seas surrounding the island. Chappel turned and joined the man in watching the Galápagos burn in their wake.

CHAPTER 2

"It tempts no wise man to pull off and see what's the matter, but bids them steer small and keep off shore -- that is Charles's Island; brace up, Mr. Mate, and keep the light astern."

—Herman Melville, "Charles's Isle and the Dog King", *The Encantatas*

1934. Galápagos Archipelago

A small fishing boat, the *Dinamita*, pitched in the black waters of the Pacific Ocean somewhere north of Santa Cruz island. The fire Chappel had started one hundred and fourteen years ago on Charles island had long since gone out, but it seemed to Rudolf Lorenz, gazing out into the night to the south from which he had come, that the great shadow still hung over the Galápagos. The tortoises still had not returned to the island—the land still as black and dead as the boat's ancient engine.

Where the whaleship *Essex* had sailed west to to the heart of the Pacific, a paradise left scorched in its passing, Lorenz fled the island for Chatham to the East, looking to board the schooner *Manuel y Cobos* and there passage to mainland Ecuador. Floreana, once called Charles island, from which Lorenz had escaped just a few short days earlier, lay dark and still through the mists that obscure the waters of the archipelago. The ailing German slumped against the side of the ship, skeletal fingers

clutching the gunwales with a fanatic's intensity. He left an island on fire as well, though its flames cast no light or heat.

The captain of the *Dinamita*, a Norwegian fisherman named Trygve Nuggerud, sprawled in the stern across a row of empty casks which had once held their meager supply of water. They'd barely brought any with them, anticipating less than a days journey to Chatham from the nearby Santa Cruz, where Lorenz had chartered Nuggerud and his boat. That had been nearly three days ago—before the choppy seas had forced the little vessel into the doldrums sometimes found in this part of the Pacific.

Nuggerud reached out with his foot and kicked Lorenz in the seat of his pants. Not hard, but enough to let the little man know he was still angry with him. Lorenz took it in stride—as he had fifteen minutes before, and twenty minutes before that.

“Dumme faen,” the Norwegian muttered.

It was his new favorite. He'd started cursing Lorenz in broken German once the engine had gone and then moved on to nearly indecipherable English when the water had run out. Now that the hostile seas had pushed them so far off-course Chatham had become a dark speck on the horizon, Nuggerud had settled on his native language to more articulately insult his miserable young passenger.

Lorenz ignored the angry captain. Nuggerud had objected to sailing these waters in their agitated state back on Santa Cruz, but Lorenz had convinced him to chance it by offering more compensation. Even now, adrift in the roiling ocean, Chatham floating ever

farther away, Lorenz still thought he'd made the right choice in putting the miles between himself and that cursed island, Floreana.

He leaned over the side of the boat, wracked by a hacking coughing fit. His wan, angular back arched up and down like a bilge pump as he coughed up foamy mouthfulls of blood out of his already dry mouth. The sputum hit the swells of the sea, holding its shape in the water for a moment before breaking apart and disappearing into the black.

“Will bring sharks,” Nuggerud hissed. “Stop. Dumme faen.”

The fishing boat pitched up as another wave parted against the bow—causing the little vessel to swing around on its axis yet again. Lorenz collapsed back into the floor, pale and gasping. At the start of the voyage, he'd already been down to nearly one hundred pounds. The sailors at port on Santa Cruz had called it White Death or Consumption—they meant Tuberculosis. And once he'd begun to waste from it, Floreana in all its idyllic perception, began to immediately reject him as not one of its own. On top of that, the lack of food and drinkable water had left Lorenz weak and delirious, his tongue swollen and hard enough to nearly fill the entirety of his sour mouth.

The boat lurched as it abruptly changed course. The crunch of splintering wood and roar of crashing waves greeted Lorenz from the other side of the boat. Nuggerud leaped to his feet, grasping at the gunwales as the boat rocked back again. The Norwegian set all about the shallow vessel twisting and pounding on various parts of the aging motor. Lorenz willed himself up to peer over the edge of the boat to reveal white water crashing on black volcanic rocks. Their edges reflected the dim moonlight in flickering clusters like men with torches seen from far away. Icy water began to fill the

vessel from a hole made by the rocks at the stern, and Lorenz pulled his cramped legs up beneath him to escape the chill.

“Land, Lorenz, we've made it. Up, dumme faen. Up!”

Lorenz scrambled about directionless across the deck of the boat. Nuggerud had called him to action, but his mind was quicker than his body to realize he had no idea what he was supposed to do.

“She's taking on water.”

Lorenz came to a stop, bracing himself against the railing.

“Can we make it?”

“Not without a motor. Not before we sink.”

Nuggerud moved to the single skiff secured to the hull of the ship by a series of ropes and pulleys. Lorenz watched his motions for a moment, then imitated what he was doing on the other end of the boat.

“Steady, alright, steady. We have to lower both sides at the same time or it will go under.” Lorenz switched his pace to match the Captain's, and after a few false starts, the skiff began to creep towards the choppy waters.

It landed with a sizable splash. Judging by Nuggerud's face, it might have been somewhat more forceful than strictly necessary. Lorenz craned his neck out over the bulwark to inspect their escape craft. It pitched crazily in the sea below, but its flat, buoyant, bottom seemed quite comfortable in comparison to the deck under his feet. Nuggerud threw one thick leg over the side of the fishing boat as frothy water began splashing into the tops of Lorenz boots. Behind him came an awful slurping, choking

sound as some of the water taken in from the breach in the hull punched through the windows of the wheelhouse at the middle of the boat.

Nuggerud launched himself over the side and landed with most of his dignity in the small skiff. Lorenz closed his eyes and did the same. He landed feet first before falling back onto his behind on one of the wooden rowing benches.

“No time to rest, boy. We've got to get away from the boat in case it goes under. I reckon we can make it to the island, must be Chatham, in less than an hour if we go non stop.”

“In case it goes under? You mean it might not? Why are we abandoning it?”

“Even if it hadn't taken on water, we've no motor. With the sea moving like it is, who knows where we'd end up after a full night of this. It's row for land now or we might never see it again.”

Lorenz forced himself to his shaky feet, and took the oar offered by the captain. He set about rowing towards the rocks that had struck them only moments before. Once clear of the larger ones, the island, which they had approached unknowingly in the dark of night, developed ahead. Instead of heading east, towards Chatham as intended, the fitful seas had pushed the little fishing boat north and west off-course in the night as they slept. Though the two men didn't know it, they were approaching Marchena island. Its steep, dark coast rose before them—discernible only from the night sky by the obliteration of stars near the horizon. It looked to Lorenz, wincing as he forced another weak stroke of the oar, to resemble the slumped back of a drowned man rising out of the ocean.

The two men had barely been noticed as missing, though others on Santa Cruz knew they were at sea and headed towards Chatham. Days later, when those that had noticed thought to search for them, their prospective rescuers would find their deserted boat drifting in the waters of the Archipelago almost one hundred miles away from where Nuggerud and Lorenz had ended up.

Another pair of missing bodies, like the two Rudolf Lorenz left behind in the hollow wilds of Floreana.

CHAPTER 3

“One loves ultimately one's desires, not the thing desired.”

—Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*

“I hate this fast growing tendency to chain men to machines in big factories and deprive them of all joy in their efforts - the plan will lead to cheap men and cheap products.”

—Richard Wagner

5 Years Earlier. Late June 1929. Charlottenburg, Berlin, Germany

Dore Strauch waited in the drawing room of her West Berlin home for her husband to return from school and meet his new wife (or so she hoped) the lovely opera singer Mila Ritter. She supposed it was a strange sort of thing to be doing, but Dore was a strange sort of woman.

Her husband was, however, remarkably mundane—even for an aging secondary school principle. Even for a German husband. Therein lay the problem, to Dore at least, even if her husband would not bring himself to admit it. Dr. Koerwin had married a German woman and expected a German hausfrau; he had instead found himself attached to a sickly young dreamer who, when she wasn't working at her lucrative position as a clerk at the bank, had her narrow, boyish face hidden in hardbound copies of Nietzsche or

Kyber. A woman who had even ceased to identify herself by her husband's name over the past few months.

Frau Ritter had none of these eccentricities. Dore watched from the drawing room as the woman set the table for her own welcoming party scheduled for later in the evening—politely adjusting Dore's careless arrangements. Mila was, in nearly every possible way, her opposite. Where Dore was strong-willed and utterly uninterested in adhering to the trappings expected of her gender, Frau Ritter seemed to inhabit her role in such a way that made cloying domesticity appear as an almost noble, elegant venture. Where Frau Strauch's hair was thin and mouse-colored, Mila's was full-bodied and fashionable. She moved with an effortless grace and purpose, even in Dore's own house, proclaiming the home-space as her own through her confident command of the evening's preparations. Dore limped about the drafty rooms on a leg gone dead to Multiple Sclerosis, never truly feeling at rest with walls that seemed to shrink with every passing month. With windows whose panes warped the view of the outside world to the point they might as well been mirrors.

Her husband was like to thank her as anything else, Dore figured. It wasn't as if she was leaving him alone to fend for himself—Frau Ritter would be there to carry on keeping his household as if nothing had changed. In fact it might change for the better. “A smooth transition” is what Mila's husband, the physician named Dr. Friedrich Ritter had said. The man was determined for the situation not to devolve into some sort of low melodrama. To that end, Dore had shown Frau Ritter around the shops and Cafés of Charlottenburg and arranged first a meeting between the pair, followed by a supper with their closest friends and family.

A hesitant knock came from the front door, and Dore opened it to find her husband hunched awkwardly on the stoop, a soggy issue of the *Berliner Herold* held over his balding head to stave off the weak summer shower.

“Silly,” Dore said. “Knocking on your own front door.”

“Is *she* here?”

“Come in come in out of the rain before you ruin the floors we've just cleaned.”

Dr. Koerwin raised an eyebrow at Dore, looking between her and Mila.

“Well, truth be told, Frau Ritter did most of that. She's quite a hand with such things. You will see. And pretty too, that hair. Did I tell you she sings?”

Dr. Koerwin held a hand in front of his wife's mouth. She stopped speaking and studied

his face. He was examining the state of the place, which Dore was quite pleased to see in such

an impressive condition. The peculiarity of the situation could be softened a bit for her husband, perhaps, by the prospect of such a well-kept home.

“Dr. Koerwin, nice to meet you, Frau.”

“And you, Herr Doctor. Mila Ritt— ”

“Yes,” Dr. Koerwin said. “Mila Clark, the opera singer. I believe I saw you in... *Fidelio* was it, at the *Städtische Oper*?”

Frau Ritter nodded her head politely to the grim, old principal and went back to her place setting.

“Well, this is going splendid,” said Dore. “Just splendid. Why, Frau Ritter—”

“Dore,” said Koerwin, “If you insist in entertaining this madness you could at least keep that name out of this house.”

Dore forced the smile mask back onto her face. It had begun so well. If only Mila would smile a bit more it might make up for her temporary slip-up. Her husband really did become quite insufferable when she let her face sour in front of him. Dore felt her cheeks twitch. She'd been told many times, especially by her father, that she possessed a wonderful gaiety of spirit—something she thought might temper the curmudgeon in her husband. But, as with most things, he only seemed to focus on the *appearance* of good cheer.

This crisis of appearances was not confined to the house of Koerwin. Mila's husband, Dr. Ritter, had often commented on the very subject, counting it among the numerous frivolous distractions he'd seen creeping through the cut-stone streets of Berlin. He'd spoken of these concerns at length, sitting on the rooftop of his private practice on Kalkreuthstrasse street with Dore, their bare feet swinging over the edge of the building and out into the open air. Their private talks played out in time stolen between his consulting hours, overlooking the choked, close-packed buildings of Berlin which lined the crowded streets.

It was then Dr. Ritter had first told her of his plan to escape.

*

To Dore, the sky stretching above them had seemed an endless sea, the clouds a collection of islands floating there in its midst. She said as much to Ritter, and he leaned back to look up with her.

“I should like to find an island like that cloud there.” He gestured at a particularly isolated tuft of white just over the horizon. “Leave this place and live as man was intended.”

Dore focused on the particular cloud in question. The longer she stared the more it took shape before her eyes—topography rising from its blank surface. First a valley, split by a freshwater creek which ran from a mountain range stretching the length of the island. Next a hill—directly in the middle on which a house with no walls to hold her inside stood silhouetted against a ocean sunset. She could see the sun rise and set from either side, see all the corners of the little island and the ocean beyond.

“So will you?”

“What, leave? Find my island. Perhaps, though I don't know if I would like to do it alone.”

“Do you hate it that much here?” Dore cast a glance his direction, she didn't know what she wanted him to say.

“Cattle. That's what I think when I see them walking below. In the streets. Humans herded in an orderly fashion to their jobs or their homes, all sharing the same filthy, insufficient air. No space, no time to think and understand.”

“Where will you go?” Dore pictured the cramped drawing room she spent a good portion of her evening dusting every day. When Dr. Koerwin entertained he'd be furious if guests were forced to socialize in space that wasn't spotless. She thought of the room-less house on the hill.

“Where we'd go depends on what we need.” He said *we*, as if he'd guessed at her thoughts. He often seemed to do that.

“Certainly I should like animals, all kinds. And beaches to swim every morning.”

“Not all animals, I think an island never before civilized by man.” Ritter retrieved a small black notebook from a pocket in his jacket, and with a pen similarly drawn from somewhere on his person, he began writing down notes on their conversation.

“Never home to natives either. I don't like the thought of taking such a place from some poor souls.”

“An isolated place then. A hard place. If we are to prove the triumph of our minds and character over nature, we can't make our home on some resort isle. Not if we are to reach our potential.”

“We'd be truly alone then. What if we grew tired of one another's company?”

“This is paramount, Dore. The complexity and untruthfulness of ordinary human relations take up vastly too much of our lives. Nietzsche says this is counterproductive to achieving a level of the superman. Finding our own Eden, only to have it encroached by others would only repeat the pattern.”

“What about the weather? I don't do well in the winter, certainly not in the rain. My breathing.”

“The Galápagos Islands are known to be astonishingly mild. I've been reading on them for this very purpose. The rains are very rare, and the climate is renown for its unchangeability. Predictability. A sort of eternal regularity.”

“Unchangeable, makes me think of my husband. I imagine he won't much relish this idea.”

“Nor my wife. If they won't come then let them have each other. Lord knows they are better suited.”

“Could we do such a thing?”

“There is no 'could', if you give a man no choice, anything is possible.”

From inside the building below, Friedrich's landlady blew a sharp note on a whistle, alerting him to the arrival of a client. He stood up, returned his journal to its place in his breast pocket, and brushed the seat of his pants off with a few curt movements from his blocky little hands.

“If we go, we build no walls,” Dore said.

“No walls.”

*

Now finally, their plan was underway.

Dore sat upon one of the flower-print sofas in the drawing room, resting her aching leg.

Her husband spoke with Frau Ritter somewhere in the next room over, possibly the kitchen.

Both of their voices were swift and clipped, like angry whispers. Dore couldn't imagine why they would be in such bad humor, though; Mila was soon to inherit a new house and Dr. Koerwin a new wife.

Even when Dore had first brought this admittedly strange proposal to her husband he had never shown her any outward anger. His reaction had mostly been one of bewilderment, both at the revelation that Dore had found love with another man (to which he had at first reacted by impotently forbidding her from seeing Dr. Ritter) and then later to the plan involving the exchange of spouses.

“It's just not done, Dore. It isn't done. What will people say?” Dore had never really considered keeping these things from her husband, and was surprised by this very lack of an inclination to do so being the very thing that seemed to cause Dr. Koerwin to fall in on himself in an irritable bout of self-pity.

Though, because of his irrational need to keep up appearances, there was never any sort of scene made by Dore's husband about the whole thing. No voices raised. No chairs thrown or physical responses aimed towards her. She might have had a good deal more respect for the man if he had. Dr. Ritter practically made a scene everywhere he went.

Through her many discussions with Friedrich Ritter, either on their walks to work through the Tiergarten or in her hospital bed during radiation treatments, Dore had come to believe in the trappings of the unchecked emotions of the modern woman. This lack of control was the tether that held them down to Earth, impeding a path to some sort of spiritual clarity. Only through the guidance of a strong man might Dore hope to achieve what Ritter spoke of as the ideal state of being. The *Superman* according to Nietzsche—a place where one no longer worried about the neighbors' perceptions, about fashionable clothing, or any sort of prescribed, modern reality. Her husband was not the man to guide her, she had come to realize. Friedrich was convinced that he was just the man to unlock her potential as more than an ill-equipped German hausfrau, more than a Multiple Sclerosis patient. She was to be an explorer.

Dr. Koerwin left soon after the introductions had been made to fetch a work colleague for the party scheduled later that evening. Their introduction had gone well enough by Dore's reasoning, though she hadn't any inclination as to any sort of romantic

leanings in the two. By her own accounting, Dr. Koerwin may very well have not had any leanings in that accord at all. In any case, the event had passed without tension, which was the very best Dore had hoped for when devising this plan with Dr. Ritter.

No sooner had Dr. Koerwin disappeared around the block in one of the dark, belching taxis, than appeared Mila's husband and Dore's lover, Dr. Friedrich Ritter upon the front step. He wasn't a tall man, but was arresting in his sharp, trollish features. Two bright blue eyes burned underneath a heavy brow. His mouth was wide and severe—like Dore's husband in some ways, but completely opposite in so many others. His was a smoldering seriousness. A contemplative, calculating coiling of a spring.

“Dore, my fellow Crusoe. Partner. How did our pair take to one another?”

“He still won't speak your name, but he is fetching his people now.” Dore ushered Friedrich into her hated drawing room and motioned for him to sit. His wife Mila was already seated at the table nearby, staring into her empty hands.

“Wife,” said Friedrich.

“Doctor Ritter,” said Mila. Dore looked between the pair, anxious that their meeting might go wrong. This was their last chance to discuss plan before leaving the next morning. She would have preferred if Frau Ritter had been somewhere else, but here she was.

“I take it Doctor Koerwin didn't see you arrive.”

“All this sneaking is quite unnecessary, I think. It isn't as if he doesn't know what we have planned for him.”

“Still.”

Friedrich shook her head in answer to her previous question as Dore took a seat beside him.

“That dress, Dore,” He said and motioned at her heels. “Those shoes. I hope you aren't planning on taking them with you to the Galápagos.”

“Of course not,” Dore crossed her legs and pulled her feet up underneath her seat to hide them. “This is just for Mila's welcoming party tonight.”

“Is he still going on about the evils of pretty clothing, Dore? He tried to make me wear those horrible shoes he made. Perhaps you both *should* just live on an island.” Friedrich waved off his wife.

“Ease of movement and comfort,” he said. “All the rest is pageantry, useless costume.”

Mila soon seemed to grow bored of Dore and Friedrich's conversation when it turned to the specifics of their supplies. The travel dates and times, the specifics of their intended diet—which Dr. Ritter was quiet convinced that, along with a *will to mend*, contributed more to hearty constitution than any physician ever could hope. Dore had existed for a time, a few years earlier, on a diet consisting only of figs. This had fascinated Friedrich, as he himself was a vegetarian, prescribing meat strictly to those of the lower class.

Mila's interest only returned at Ritter's mention of his new set of metal dentures.

“False teeth, Friedrich, what on Earth do you need those for?”

He responded by opening his mouth wide and presenting to her a completely toothless and perfectly round hole.

“Wonderful. Why? Do I even want to know?”

“My teeth had already been worn down because, of course, of my intensive mastication habits during the eating process.”

“Of course.” Mila rolled her eyes.

“Well, I decided to do away with them all. I plan to exist solely on fruits and vegetables of my own cultivation, and I am planning to write extensively on a study concerning the viability of gum-toughening as an alternative to the human tooth.”

Mila left the room as Dr. Ritter and Dore continued their discussion—which grew into an argument when the two became at odds over certain items to bring with them. Friedrich insisted on including in their luggage a rifle, to which Dore objected on the basis of its existence being at odds to their agreed upon principle theory of peace towards all things. He agreed to drop the subject when she brought up the topic of medicine—which Ritter refused outright as damaging to their planned reliance on man's natural power of the mind over the body in treating illness.

“So where is this island exactly?” said Mila. She had wandered back into the room after hearing their heated debate.

“Floreana is an uninhabited island in the Galápagos Archipelago off the coast of Ecuador. Directly on top of the equator.”

“Completely uninhabited?”

“Well,” said Dore, “Some of the larger islands have communities, but we chose one that has only been home to pirates and whalers for short periods of time.”

“And a prison colony for a bit,” Friedrich said. “But that was a long while ago. Darwin visited once.”

“What does it mean, Floreana?”

“Flower in Spanish,” Dore said.

“One of the Enchanted Isles, as they are called. So named for their curse upon those who try to call it their home.”

“Why then did you choose this place?”

“Because we will prove it to be false—succeed where the lesser have failed.”

Dore listened as the pair argued over Friedrich's reasoning for leaving, the perceived sudden selfishness of his decision, before looking outside the window to observe the sun already hidden behind the uniform monoliths of civilization in the early evening. She shooed the doctor out of the house before her husband arrived with the guests for Mila's welcoming party. He objected in a sputtery, obliging sort of way, but seemed equally eager to leave before the festivities started. His wife seemed outright relieved he had gone.

CHAPTER 4

“Change happens through movement and movement heals.”

—Joseph Pilates

Late June 1929. Charlottenburg, Berlin, Germany

Dore's supper party started early that evening after Friedrich had gone. The guests arrived in huddled groups, leaning into one another on the stoop for shelter from the summer rain. First came Dore's mother and younger sister. She could see their home-made felt cloche hats crumpled against one another through the window as she limped to open the door for them

The pair hurried inside with a grim, tight-lipped greeting for Dore. Her mother had not taken the news of her planned adventure very well. Even drenched, their hats held their bowl shape better than her own effort. She'd wanted to buy one (after all who would have known?) but her husband, Dr. Koerwin had insisted she try her hand at sewing one herself.

“I know you think you have no talent for it, Dore, but how will you feel when you are the only one with a store-bought hat?” In hindsight, she'd have felt fine.

She adjusted the brim, crimping the soft felt material around the edges to force it out of her periphery. Mila had complimented her on it earlier, but in that tone she found women used when complimenting simply to fulfill societal obligation. A lady has a new

hat—compliment the lady's hat. A lady cuts her hair into a bob—compliment the bob. Dore had found that if the compliment was followed with a proclamation that they themselves considered and then chose not to wear such a hat or cut then it was understood that the speaker was complimenting disapprovingly.

Frau Ritter had, in fact, mentioned the bold design choice in creating such a large and asymmetrical brim to her cloche. It would not have worked for her own face shape it turned out.

Dore had just managed to usher her mother and sister to the spotless drawing room when another knock came from the door. She left them in the company of her husband and Frau Ritter and went to greet the newest visitors. The curved brim of her hat again wilted down around her face, creating a fuzzy tunnel like blinders on a horse. Her uneven gait seemed impossibly loud to her own ears, clip-clopping on the hardwood floor. Perhaps she was slowly turning into a horse—her primary school nicknames made prescient.

The next guests to arrive for the supper party were a colleague of her husband's from his school and his wife, followed by the uncomfortable pair consisting of Dore's engineer cousin and an estranged friend with whom Dore had quarreled months before and not spoken with again until this party. She hurried them inside out of the rain, taking coats and exchanging shallow greetings.

Dore rested against a door frame and watched these last guests join in and make introductions with the rest. Looking at her now, Dore couldn't quite remember why she had thought it so imperative that she invite her friend. To leave unburdened, she supposed. Their journey to the Galápagos was no small thing, and to undertake it with the

weight of unresolved grudges and arguments hanging about her neck would perhaps pull her under the sea before making her destination. It was why this party, in truth her own farewell celebration, was presented as an introduction of Mila to the people closest to Dore. She hoped that upon her departure Frau Ritter could replace her in her husband's life in all aspects without confusion or incident. Dore's mother and sister also knew of her unorthodox agreement with the Ritters, as well as her upcoming travel plans(at least in part), but all outside the immediately family simply thought Mila was staying with the Koerwins in Charlottenburg while her husband was away on business.

“Dore,” her husband bellowed. “Stop hiding by the stairs and come join our guests.”

She narrowed her eyes.

Dore sat down abruptly on the bottom step of the stairwell and peeled the velvet louis heeled shoes from feet and replaced them with soft, form-fitting, footwear that Dr. Ritter had made for her. She stretched out her toes in the shoe, feeling the supple leather stretch and cling to each individual digit. They was a tighter fit than her heels, but somehow felt less constricting at the same time.

She walked to the drawing room—her limp less pronounced and making no sound upon the floors as she joined the party.

*

There had been an awkward tension in the drawing room preceding supper. In truth no one but Dore truly understood what was going on that night. Things went considerably better once all the guests busied themselves with eating. Less questions—less confused glances. Despite Dore's best efforts, most present had guessed that the

event was not just a welcome party for Mila, but she imagined none could possibly have figured out the strange occasion for its other purpose. She looked down at her plate to hide a smile. If Friedrich were here she wouldn't have to worry about being the object of so much scrutiny. Of being the odd puzzle trying to be worked out. No matter what he said, Dr. Ritter would not have been able to hide his enthusiasm for their trip, nor had he any stomach for keeping secrets. It was one of the things that made her so eager to disappear with him into the Pacific.

Berlin was a city of secrets during the Weimar, and Berliners a people of them. Or, if not secrets necessarily, then lies. A republic made of the shared fantasy of change, culture, and innovation. Under the Kaiser, the modern German woman had defined position in society centered around what was called the “Kirche, Kueche, Kinder”—church, kitchen and children. Following the rise of the Weimar ten years ago, women were guaranteed a new legal status equal to men. A celebrated untruth everyone knew but agreed to collectively pretend they did not. This parity existed in legal documents and political speeches only. A Potemkin village constructed to hide the deconstruction of German culture. Like the hot flash of art and science sizzling on the streets of Berlin, existing only to burn out as quickly as it had come. The lie of culture—of change. Change could only happen through forced motion, if not forward than far. That is why she was leaving for Floreana: to find something new that was sustainable.

“Did you see the panhandlers on the walk over, Dr. Koerwin?” Dore's friend was attempting to fill the silence in the lull following the main course.

“Is that what they were? Hard to tell from the artists and eccentrics any more.”

“One of the ladies was dressed like a man,” Dore's sister said. “Trousers and a tie and everything.

“Hardly blame them,” Dr. Koerwin said. “I can barely keep track of which money to use these days myself. Mark, Reichsmark, gold mark... I read that not five years ago one American dollar was worth four billion, or was it trillion—it was trillion—German marks. It's a wonder we aren't all begging.”

“It's not polite to talk of money.” Dore's mother frowned at her as if she'd brought it up.

“They'll be off the streets by now in any case,” Dr. Koerwin's colleague said. “With the demonstrations. The Stahlhelm with their cars and their signs. They don't have much patience for those types.”

“A fine time for a party, Dore, of all days.” Her sister.

“Well it had to be, I'm leaving tomorrow—just because the country is in mourning doesn't mean we have to be.”

“A trip, Dore?” her cousin said. “I didn't know you were planning to travel.”

Dore winced and sneaked a side-glance at her husband, who had busied himself with dessert.

“Yes, a short trip. To the beach, good for my leg you know. Doctor's orders.”

“You should bring a physician with you then.” Mila arched an eyebrow at her from across the table.

“What are the Stahlhelm?” Dore could have kissed her sister.

“Bunch of old soldiers who can't let the past be the past, that's who.” Dore's friend's statement drew frowns from the older men of the group.

“Hard to let the past go when your whole country stabbed you in the back during a war.” Dr. Koerwin's colleague seemed to isolate himself away from the rest of the group with his guarded posture.

“You know,” said Dore, “I heard a story about another group of old soldiers. A hundred years ago, across the world in Ecuador, the leader of a failed revolution stole a ship and sailed to a tiny island in the middle of the Pacific ocean. An island named for a King who never had even seen it: Charles Island.”

Dore paused. The men had settled down it seemed, and her husband was leaning slightly forward in his seat. Her young sister had even managed to forget she should be sulking for the moment.

“He took with him a hundred prisoners. Pirates even. Murderers and thieves—the type of men only wars and jails need. Anyway, this leader, a military officer, set himself up as a sort of tyrant ruler on this uninhabited island. His hundred lawless men were forced into hard labor for years—hunting and mining and logging—held in check by pitiless guards. But these guards weren't what you are thinking, no. The officer had brought with him as many giant mastiffs as he could fit onto his ship. Some said to be the size of Arabian horses. That's how he came to be known as 'The Dog King of Charles Island'.”

“I daresay I see the logic in the name.” Dore's friend leaned into her cousin to giggle against his shoulder.

“Is he still the king there?” her sister asked.

“No, eventually the rebel was overthrown by a rebellion against him in turn and he was forced to flee back to the mainland—just him and his most loyal beasts. Years

later men returned to the island to see what was left of his subjects—all they found were the giant mastiffs, without a single sign of all the men.”

“I’ve never heard of Charles Island.” Dore’s friend frowned.

“The name was changed to Floreana about—”

“Good lord,” Dr. Koerwin said. “Dore, this is where you and *that man* choose to go?”

“What man?” asked his colleague.

“Yes, Frau, *what* man?” Mila asked with raised eyebrows. She gulped down her drink.

Dore pushed herself away from the table, feeling an embarrassed heat rising into her cheeks. She busied herself with clearing some of the plates from the table as her guests began a confused back-and-forth, all talking over one another. She dumped the plates off in the kitchen and returned to again find her guests focusing their attention directly onto her alone.

“Dore,” asked her mother with a strained voice. “What sort of shoes are those?”

Mila’s head bucked back with such force as she laughed that Dore thought she might lose her hat to the motion. Dore knew she’d changed into Friedrich’s shoes for a reason, but standing there, her guests’ eyes on her twisted lower body, she couldn’t quite remember what point she had been trying to make. She resisted the inexplicable, overwhelming urge to waggle her toes at them.

“They are quite unique,” her friend finally said. “I wish I was bold enough to wear them.”

“My doctor made them for me. For the limp.”

“Yes, my husband is quite outspoken about the evils of the modern shoe. For a short man he certainly has an aversion to concept of a heel.”

“The man *is* a heel.” Dr. Koerwin made a fist with both his bony hands. He and Mila shared a conspiratorial glance, and Dore couldn't help but feel encouraged. Perhaps the party wasn't going too poorly after all. It seemed their shared resentment of Friedrich might be just the thing to bring them together.

“Yes, well,” Dore mumbled. “His designs were part of his endeavor to join in the formation of the Berlin Circle last year—along with his theory on the human will as a practical healing instrument.”

“He's a practicing physician. Is this how he's been treating you?” her mother said.

“Along with dietary restrictions and more traditional methods.”

“No, Frau Strauch, it isn't as odd as it sounds,” Dore's friend said. “There's lots of of new ways of thinking about these things.”

“At my boarding school,” Dore's sister said, “we start each morning before class with Life Reform Movement exercises.”

“Yes, that is what it is called.”

“What on Earth is a movement exercise?” Dr. Koerwin's colleague said.

“Um, we mostly just dance slowly.”

“Yes,” Dore's friend said. “I do that part. It's quite rigorous. I have a book about it written by a man named Joseph Pilates if you'd like to take a look. Don't worry, there are pictures.”

She and the engineer again bent into one another to share a bout of giggles. Dore seemed to be creating connections tonight beyond her own husband and her replacement.

“Well, thank you but no,” Dr. Koerwin said. “Everything is strange enough now without seeing this book of yours. I can't go to the beach without wading into a sea of nude men, can't take a stroll through our city without having to see a sex museum or venue. Maybe I should follow you and your doctor to that island—I'm starting to understand your inclination.”

“Dore,” her friend asked, “Is this Dr. Ritter the man you are taking on your trip?”

Dore held her breath. Had everyone seen through her attempted deception? Her husband would never forgive her if everyone learned about their unorthodox agreement. She needed a distraction.

“Umm, a song, Frau Ritter, she's a Soprano you know. In the opera.” Dore rushed over behind Mila to help her up. The woman swayed as she gained her feet, her face flushed from the evening's drinks.

“Of course, Dore, whatever your heart's desire. I have just the tune in mind.”

Dore blew out a long anxious breath she hadn't realized she'd been holding as she took her seat for Mila's performance. She hadn't anticipated so many questions about her trip, or Friedrich for that matter. Perhaps she should have seen it coming, but she had really planned for the evening to be about welcoming Frau Ritter and saying farewell to those closest to her. Naive, she supposed now—to think Mila and her husband, no matter how polite they had been, hadn't harbored misgivings about their current odd situation. Friedrich had advised against the party for this very reason—that and his aversion to meat, alcohol, and groups of people gathered for frivolous activities.

Dore made an attempt to pay attention to Mila's voice—which really was lovely, if a little loose around the edges after a few drinks. She'd explained before she began that

her audience was to picture her in the bath for the duration of the song. Odd, but then she supposed most of what was going on that night was odd in some fashion. Going on in this particular house in Charlottenburg, throughout Berlin in the back alleys and dance halls, in greater Germany on the anniversary of the Treaty of Versailles—but not on her future island. Not on Floreana. It wasn't odd or not odd, it just was as it always had been.

Waiting.

“What is she singing about?” Dore asked her husband.

“The wonders of modern plumbing. From *Neues Vom Tage*.”

Dore wasn't sure if the selection of the song was supposed to be some sort of insult directed at her or not, but Dr. Koerwin certainly seemed to enjoy the choice for whatever reason. When Mila had finished he applauded louder than the rest and whistled through his fingers as she bowed.

*

Dore's mother and sister were the first to leave. The pair stood in the open doorway, their face wet with tears finally shed openly away from the other guests.

“How will you live? How will you eat?” Dore pulled her mother into a loose embrace. Her sister leaned against the door frame and stared out into the night.

Somewhere downtown the Steel Helmets were reciting old call and response military cadence songs. Flags on polls flapped in the breeze at half mast.

“I'll live. I'll eat. Because I will have to.”

“But your poor leg. You aren't well Dore. You are so fragile. Ever since you were your sister's age. Always so fragile—sensitive.”

“Let's go, mother.” Dore's sister had begun to edge out toward the street. “I'm due back at school in the morning.”

For a moment Dore let the thought of staying flash across her periphery. Just a moment. Despite the tension, she'd had a lovely night with the people she was closest to in this world. Berlin was a place she barely recognized, a place barely any one there recognized any more. But was that such a bad thing. Much of what Friedrich had taught her could be seen all around the city. Even at her sister's boarding school. Perhaps what they were looking to create in the Galápagos was coming to Germany anyway. In its own time.

But no, when it came—if it came—it would be fleeting. Replaced by the next thing as all things are. Friedrich and she would create something forever in a place untouched by the passage of the world around it. And that was as much of it as the rest. The island was small enough and isolated enough to be impacted in such a big way by just the two of them. They wouldn't have to adapt to it, it would adapt to them. Where else in the world could such a thing be said?

“I shall see you again.” Her mother's last words to her before she left Germany for the other side of the world. Dore didn't have the heart to tell her that she never would.

*

Hours later, all the guests had retired except for Mila and Dr. Koerwin, who of course were both now home. From her husband's study, Dore could hear Frau Ritter banging about with the crockery in the kitchen. The woman could be sharp with her tongue, especially in her cups, but say this for Mila, she kept a clean house. Had Mila left with the other guests the dishes might have stayed soiled on the table until Dore's

husband pestered her enough to put them away. Is it something some women are just born with and some are not, or is there a capacity in all of them to be the proper hausfrau? *Might I have be just like Mila if not for my Multiple Sclerosis—is that what makes me so useless to my husband?* Friedrich hypothesized she was simply not made for the modern world, as he wasn't.

“Just take it, Dore.” Dr. Koerwin said. “Two thousand Reichsmarks, and I would give you more if I could spare it.”

“What good is money on an uninhabited island?”

“Verdammt, woman. If I can't stop you from doing this I won't have you starving to death and stranded. You'll need money, supplies get spoiled, they get lost. Boat captains want more payment—what if you want to return, what if your doctor dies? How will you get home if you have no money? Have you thought of that?”

“You know I am not planning to return. But if it makes you feel better I will take it. For you, though, honestly, we have all we need.”

“As long as you take it, whatever your reasons. Keep your head, don't lose it. And don't let that man make all the decisions. You'll both be dead in a year.”

“What about the other thing? Have you thought on it like I asked?”

“I have.”

“So? Will you come join us when you can? You and Mila?”

Dr. Koerwin stared blankly at Dore's hopeful face. He squinted and cocked his head to the side. Dore's smile faltered—*why will he not even consider this?* She knew he hadn't no matter what he said.

“Dore...”

“Once you come out and see—how about that, just come out and see—I know you won't be able to leave.”

“Well, that's disconcerting.”

“You're teasing me. But I'll ask you anyway, don't just humor me.”

“Fine, just stop asking. I'll consider it more. Maybe one day. The way things are going here, you never know.”

“Thank you.”

“Now, did you write the letter?” Dore rummaged through the pocket of her coat, which was folded neatly over one arm. She held out a small sheet of paper filled with slanting, close-packed letters. Her husband held the paper up to his face and scanned what was written.

“It is everything you asked for. I account for your quality as a husband, wage-earner, and man. Your character, gentleness and charity of spirit. I left out nothing.”

“And this says why you have gone? That I've done nothing to drive you to such ends?”

“Yes, I said 'everything!'.”

“Then let's be through with this.”

Dr. Koerwin herded Dore out of their home and onto the streets after a rushed goodbye to Mila (no more than a holler and a wave between doorways). She hadn't expected tears, not from those two, but now that the night had ended she felt a sort of lack of finality. This supper party was about leaving behind the past, closing the book to begin the new one. Perhaps it was the unknown for those left here in Berlin. For her husband and Frau Ritter. How would he get along without her, and how would he get along with

her replacement? Would she wear the dresses that Dore could not take with her? Would they grow to love one another, at least in a fashion that could make them happy? Dore worried that no matter how perfect Mila seemed, and she was close, Dr. Koerwin might never warm to her as she might have hoped. It is no small thing to be abandoned by a spouse, she knew this. What if he would never let her go?

He walked her to the streetcar at the end of the block, arm entwined through her own. They stopped and stood, holding each other for what would—in all likelihood—be the last time. Dore looked back at their modest home. It looked flat and black against the night sky, its shape broken up by the light from the windows like holes into some subterranean cavity full of faraway luminescence. Mila's silhouette drifted between the holes, tidying and straightening—already fitting into the space better than Dore ever had in the years she had lived there.

Dr. Koerwin leaned in and kissed Dore high on one cheek.

“If you come back don't ever try to find me.”

Dore looked up at his face, startled. She couldn't read his expression, back-lit by the streetlamps as it was. The shadows of his brows and nose swooped down in long, jigsaw shapes like the expressionist paintings she'd taken Mila to see at the gallery the day before. She'd read that the Expressionists painted to express the meaning of an emotion or experience rather than the emotion or experience itself.

Dr. Koerwin stood and watched her depart in the streetcar, waving one hand in a barely perceptible motion at his waist. He turned and went back into the house with Frau Ritter before his wife had gone out of sight.

*

That night—after Friedrich fell asleep and could not criticize her need for physical intimacy in bed—Dore draped her coltish limbs over his narrow body and dreamed of eternity. Doctor Ritter had described to her many times over what the future held for them in their secluded paradise at the center of the world, though he rarely included details of place. His was a world inside his own head—full of philosophical reading and writing, experimentation, tests of will, and triumphs of the mind over the body. And above all: stillness.

Dore shared his vision. He spoke to her as a confidant and co-conspirator. Friedrich neither acknowledged nor cared that she was a terrible homemaker and most likely useless as a mother due to her chronic infirmity. So she shared his vision—longed to be free of the four lonely walls confining the landscape for her assigned role as a proper German hausfrau.

Longed to be still together. Through in her dreams she dreamed of motion, and she was alone.

She shifted her toes in cold sand. Dore stood naked on a black beach of chipped volcanic glass. The water beyond stood still like a black and white photograph while the land around her inhaled and exhaled like a living island tide to the rhythm of her involuntary hand tremors. She made a fist to still herself and the land shuddered to a stop.

Dore was alone.

She didn't realize her dream was absent sound until it arrived in crashing waves. But the surf yet lay still. She spun around, looking inland, to see a rolling tide of falling trees moving towards the beach. The timber foamed and tumbled before breaking in a wave upon the ground only to be swept up in the the next surging crash of vegetation.

The destruction soon revealed itself to be the wake of a parade of great tortoises—
tortuga—towering over the impossibly green jungle below with their cracked, black
bodies and medallioned shells. They moved slow, slower than their distance traveled
implied and though they moved together, each seemed to be individually the last of their
kind.

Dore stepped aside as they moved past and over her into the sea. Bits of moss and
lichens dripped from their wrinkled beaks onto her head. She looked up at their bright
underbellies—a gleaming beacon amid a mountain of geological flesh. It was like
watching the slow march of time itself, or perhaps the results of it left behind in rapidly
filling footprints in the sand.

She followed the colossi into the cold shallows, the tide now set to motion again
to the rhythm of her sickly tremors. The blasted globes of the tortoises' shells disappeared
last beneath the shuddering waves, cracked and colorless acacia trees growing from the
furrows between the armored plates moving away from shore were the only sign they had
ever been with her on the island.

Dore moved farther out to sea after them, up to her bowed knees. The tortoises
had left her Eden, they would form a new paradise far from her witness. As if they knew
Doctor Ritter and she were coming. She wished she could follow alone—already pinned
on three sides by the now blackened desolation of Floreana Island.

She turned back to look upon her paradise to find the color and movement had left
with the tortuga.

Dore left for the Galápagos Islands the next morning and dreamed of them no
more.

CHAPTER 5

“...read between the lines of my brief history and see why I am I.”

—Friedrich Ritter, “Letter to Captain G. Allan Hancock”

“It is not down in any map; true places never are.”

—Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*

August 31 1929. Guayaquil, Ecuador.

Dore and Friedrich, both traveling under the name Ritter though still married to their respective spouses, waited on-board the *Manuel y Cobos*, the schooner set to take them to their new home in the Galápagos Islands. It had languished in port far longer than expected due to the unexplained absence of its captain, a rumored onetime German spy and Norwegian ex-pat by the name of Bruuns. Now, after nearly a month of travel, starting in Berlin, then to Amsterdam, followed by another month cooling their heels in Ecuador waiting for a ship going to the remote Archipelago, the pair found themselves eager to embark on the last leg of their journey.

The Captain arrived back on deck nearly as disheveled as his ship, which had just returned from the Galápagos with a full cargo of cattle and human passengers. Dore moved forward to introduce herself as he boarded, Friedrich hanging back—antisocial as ever—but thought better of it as Captain Bruuns immediately started barking orders to set the journey in motion.

Over the side of the ship, Dore watched a close-packed group of port officers arguing with the owner of the *Manuel y Cobos*, whom she and Friedrich had met earlier in the day. They gestured wildly at Captain Bruuns, though she could not make out their exact words.

“Welcome aboard the *Manuel y Cobos*, you must be the German ... homesteaders, everyone's been talking about.” The Captain had taken a break from his orders and approached the Ritters. He was about fifty five, with a ruddy complexion and the blonde hair one might expect from a Norwegian.

“I prefer the term explorers,” Frederick said. “Since we plan to do so much more than simply build a home. You see, as explorers of the *mind* and land my son and I not only—”

“Beg your pardon, Doctor, your son?” Bruuns glanced between Dore and Ritter.

Dore stood up as straight and tall as she could, throwing out her chest as the Captain examined her. It had been Friedrich's idea, first articulated in one of their many early morning walks through the Tiergarten back in Berlin, to have Dore dress as a male youth for the duration of their voyage to the Galápagos Islands. Her hair was nearly short enough to pass for the fashion without adjustment, and her figure had never been commented upon as particularly feminine as far as those things were judged at the time. Dore didn't mind the performance, and in fact reveled in the opportunity to escape the trappings of expectation assigned to German women. She'd even left the bulk of her dresses for Frau Ritter to find once she moved in with her husband.

For his part, Friedrich seemed to delight to no end in her costume. Dore found him infinitely more affable in her shirt and slacks, a smile closer to his lips than when she

wore heels or bright colors. He ran a soft hand through her mousy hair as Bruuns looked on, flashing an odd, toothless smile at the Captain.

“My boy here.”

“Right,” Bruuns adjusted the sun-worn cap riding low on his head. “I’m just getting you there, Doctor. No business of mine. Though, you might want to consider getting the ... boy a hat. Sun can cook you out on the open ocean, especially if we hit the doldrums. It’s one thousand kilometers of Pacific between you and paradise.”

“A misconception, Captain. The human hair is the perfect evolutionary solution to the sun’s harsh rays. Why rely on hats when man grows the most perfect hat, with the most perfect shade, himself?”

“That right?” Bruuns looked at Dore, an eyebrow cocked.

“Oh yes,” Dore said as she looked up at the sun directly overhead. The heat and glare of it seemed to wash over her in waves, though the breeze seemed to keep the worst of it off. “The use of hats by the modern man only hampers our ability to withstand what man has always been able to master.”

Captain turned abruptly away from the pair as a crash came from the stern of the ship and stalked away bellowing orders in a combination of Norwegian and Spanish. The Ritters settled onto the worn benches built into the bulwark, and rested their backs against the warm wooden surface. Dore, for her part, felt a new sense of oneness with Friedrich. A absolution of purpose absent of regret that she knew in the moment he shared. She rolled her head back against her companion’s shoulder and let the movements of the ship leaving port ease her nerves about the final journey over open ocean in front of them.

Everything they had talked about since first they met was rapidly approaching as a tangible reality.

*

She was in her early twenties when they'd first met—or maybe it was the mid twenties by then— in any case, thinking back now, years later, Dore was amazed at how young she felt. She was a married woman when she first spoke to Dr. Ritter, but his confidence and presence had made her feel like a gradeschooler talking out of class with one of her teachers.

They'd first met while she was recovering from ray treatments at the Hydrotherapeutic Unit at the University of Berlin. Friedrich was one of the retinue of assistants to the head physician who was monitoring her recovery process. Her first impression of the man was that he was possessed of a brutal sort of face, with a mysterious absence in his expression. He had striking, intense blue eyes and a wild crown of curled hair which set him apart from the more plainly featured assistants, along with his older age.

Strange now to remember her first thought had been that she hoped he wouldn't be the one to examine her in any capacity. Something about the emptiness of his gaze—the lack of mirroring on his face while the other staff smiled back at her. It turned out, however, that they would become fast friends. Dr. Ritter began to stay longer and longer after the others had left on their rounds, sitting at the foot of her hospital bed and informing her of the concept of the healing power of thought. The unstoppable triumph of the human mind in its capacity to confront problems of the body.

Dore in turn opened up to her frustrations at her role in modern German society. He had developed similar views on the trappings of the structured, crowded way of life for Berliners, though proved to be a fascinated and attentive audience for her female perspective of the cloistered life of the hausfrau. He'd never considered his personal view of the restrictive nature of modern society might parallel the experience of the German woman's existence.

“To find someone who shares in my thoughts, Doctor Ritter,” said Dore one evening. “One who is willing to listen to me. I feel like I don't know what I might have done without you these past weeks. I don't know if I could have borne the loneliness and silence a day longer.”

“What of your husband? Does he not see or hear you in this? Are you leaving him, is that what this is about?”

“No, Doctor,” Dore shut her eyes and laid her head back down onto her pillow. He would not understand the next. “It is not a question of my husband or my marriage. More of *all* husbands. All marriages. I am a student of philosophy, I keep a good job at the bank, yet none of that allows me to escape those four walls of my home even when I am without. Only these treatments, my Multiple Sclerosis gives me vacation from what I am made to be: The good house wife.”

But Friedrich had understood, at least some part of it that her husband and father never had. Though she knew it wasn't the same thing, Dore nodded her head as she expanded on her thoughts on the subject—likening her feeling to the restrictive expectations of all people living under the rigid strictures of modern society. Social decorum, patriotism, medicine, modern fashion and the dependence on money. These

were the oppressive four walls of all men according to him. Dore saw in him a smoldering anger, quiet but always there. She wondered how great the blaze might be were he born a woman instead.

“And of family and love,” he continued. “So much is put to ceremony, to ritual. So much of courtship is left to obligation and the laws of the land.”

“I love my husband, but does that mean I cannot love another?”

“There is no 'cannot' Dore, which you seem to know—possibly better than even I. If you love another, then you do. Good society says you may not, like good society says I may not love my niece. She is my family and she is twenty years my junior, and yet I loved her once. Nothing became of it, I am a married man, but the fact did not change that I loved her. It is false.”

Their talks in the evenings became walks in the mornings, then stolen time on the roof of his private practice, until finally they found themselves together in the most remote part of the Pacific Ocean just days away from their new life apart from all the mindless restrictions of Berlin.

*

The sun was beginning to set by the time Ritter stirred beside Dore on the cooling bench seat. He craned his neck to the side, his nose inches from hers, and watched her as she stretched herself back to the present.

“What were you thinking of, my Friday?”

“I thought I was your fellow Crusoe.”

“My Crusoe.” Friedrich's face was already red and peeling from the sun, his hair stiff and wild from the salt spray.

“Do you remember the first year we met, when you walked me back to my home in Charlottenburg late one night? We made good byes at the gate, but then you ran back to my door before I could go in.”

“Ah yes.”

“Why did you come back?”

“Your husband. He'd been watching us from a window, and as I was leaving it struck me as cowardly to go without introducing myself. We'd become such good friends, spent so much time together. All our talk of restrictions and propriety, there was no reason I could not meet the man. He knew of me and I knew of him, this pretending the other didn't exist—well that was just pretense.”

Dore looked him directly in his wild, blue eyes. She wondered how she had ever thought them absent. “After you'd gone, and we went inside, my husband confronted me about our relationship. I never told you. He asked me if you were in love with me. I had no answer for him.”

She cut herself off short, barely finishing her final word. Somewhere aft, Captain Bruuns began shouting orders to his crew. The voice carried in the open sea and seemed to hang in space as the ship moved steadily forward—like smoke from a belching engine being strewn above its wake. Boots clattered on the deck as the Captain moved nearby.

“Supper in five minutes. Miss it and you're going hungry, *explorers*.”

“It is hard to answer this question, Dore,” said Friedrich. “You know, as yourself to Doctor Koerwin, I am devoted of course to my wife, Mila.”

“But that doesn't mean you cannot love another.”

“Indeed, there is no 'cannot'.” Dore dropped her head and leaned to kiss Friedrich on the corner of his prickly mouth. His whiskers rubbed against her lip and felt like adventure in their roughness. When she pulled away her skin was cold where his new-beard had rubbed at it.

They settled in together against the gunwale as the smell of boiling meats wafted from the stern. Dore watched through half-closed eyes as Captain Bruuns shook his head at the pair before heading for the stairs leading below deck.

“If you and your son are done necking, the ship's owner invites you to dine with myself and him in his cabin.” Dore found herself giggling into Friedrich's collar.

“Thank you Captain, but we prefer to be alone.”

*

Twenty days later, on the 19th of September, Dore and Friedrich set foot for first time onto the white sands of Floreana. Their approach was delayed by a quick stop to offload the bulk of their larger luggage, followed by a tour of the other more populated islands in the Archipelago.

When they returned, the Ritters, which Friedrich had insisted they be called, clasped one another's shoulders at the bow as the *Manuel y Cobos* sailed into Post Office Bay. The ancient hogshead mail barrel used by whalers back in the 18th century stuck out from the beach like a lone welcome party guiding them in. Dore sheltered her eyes from the cloudless sun with a trembling hand. She'd been mostly free of her M.S. symptoms during their journey, aside from the odd dizzy spell, but the closer the ship drew to land the more numb her fingertips grew.

Once ashore, Friedrich immediately set about directing the crew of the *Cobos* in their unloading efforts. They moved the last of the pair's luggage, mostly ignoring his instruction, into the chalet, known as *Casa Matriz* or “Mother House”, situated a bit farther inland. It was of Norwegian build, and in a rough state—the wooden siding was gapped and in some places hanging off at diagonals from the surface by a single nail. The area behind the place was fenced in by useless chicken-wire bent to the ground in some places by the gnarled, tumble-weed-like, foliage that dominated the entire beach past the high-tide line.

Dore had known the island was bleak in comparison to the others in the Archipelago, but was unprepared with how still—how dead it seemed. Even the cabin, raise off the ground a good four feet on stilts, seemed like a corpse on a pyre yet to be lit. Gray, leafless plant-life had grown up from underneath like sentient kindling. It crept through the gaps in the floorboards of the porch and crawled into the openings of the chalet from all directions. Everywhere was the evidence of time's ravaging and disrepair—nothing here was the way it had been first made. The massive dynamo, long since useless as a power source, was sunk a foot into the sand on the far side of the cabin. Soon, Dore thought, the island would swallow it up entirely. Then the water tanks, crooked chimneys, and finally the Mother House would be forgotten altogether.

She turned away from the pitiful place. Looking inland, Dore followed the gentle incline into the treeline, until finally a lush jungle emerged at the foot of a low rise in geography. A volcano, she realized. A dead, black, volcano, obliterating much of the afternoon sky. She looked back at the coast line, scanning the shallows. Tiny copies of

the volcano rose straight from the sea in rough, pitted forms on which the sea foam seemed to accumulate in dirty, girdle-like clumps around the island.

“The sea foam.” Dore stood still, one hand partially outstretched towards the clumps.

Friedrich moved away from the cabin to join her up the beach. To Dore he appeared to take two steps for each logical movement, as if he were jumping back in time every foot of ground he gained towards her. His face shrouded in a colorless green-gray blur like a photograph spoiled by sudden movement.

“Sea foam.”

Friedrich stopped just out of reach of Dore. He cocked his head and studied her expression. Dore forced herself not to look at him as he swayed in her periphery. He took her hand and stepped into the beginnings of the treeline. She felt herself pulled behind him and resisted the urge to break his grasp and race into the wilderness of the island alone. The impulse passed when her hands began to tremble.

All at once she found herself overpowered by a bout of fatigue so sudden and acute that she crumpled in a boneless heap to her knees, bringing Friedrich down with her. He was speaking, but she could only hear the metronome of the breakers catching on the black lava boulders. She twisted her body around to look back on the ocean.

The water was still, but the white stretch of beach bordering it seemed to pulse to the rhythm of the sound of the waves. She lay back and focused on quieting the painful spasms in her legs.

Friedrich's voice: "Close your eyes. Let the tremors come. Experience your symptoms and allow your body to heal you. You are your mind, Dore, not your body. The body is only the shell."

"The sea foam, Friedrich." She was focused so intently on stilling her trembling extremities that her words were almost completely incomprehensible through her clenched jaw. She heard the sounds she uttered out loud—they seemed to hang in the air in front of her like hot breath in cold weather—and did not know why she had said them.

Friedrich sat down on the sand beside her shaking body. He rested a lithe, sunburned arm across one knee and squinted up into the cloudless sky. Dore watched from the corner of her eye as he carefully dripped sand from one palm to another like a spinning hourglass.

"You are not your body. You are not lying on the sand on this beach. You are with me in the Black Forest. We are a boy."

Dore stilled as he spoke of a lonely childhood in Wollbach—focusing only one his voice and not her body betraying her in the sand.

*

She saw Friedrich's father, a frugal and serious storekeeper—a land owner and son of a farmer. He was also the community's carpenter and handy man. A maker of things. A man in a way the son knew he would never be. Friedrich's father had no time or interest for his small, sickly boy, and mostly left him in the care of his doting mother.

As a boy, Friedrich found solace in schooling, though his father held no pride for his son there. Their relationship became more distant the more academic the boy's pursuits. Soon even his one interest was ruined by a harsh school-master fond of capital

punishment by way of public beatings with a switch. Friedrich found that he could escape the rigid systems of both his home and school in the peace of the Black Forest. He could find stillness there and explore his own thoughts among the ancient, unchanging trees. In this way he discovered his greatest pleasure: to follow his own whims wherever they might lead, without having to accommodate his behavior or intent to the will of any other. To be his own master.

But his refuge was again short-lived, as his father took an interest in his trips to the forest. He attempted to instill in his son an appreciation in the sport of hunting. For his part, Friedrich could never find the enjoyment in the wanton killing of animals.

On one trip, his father caught a red-tailed bird that had been eating the family's bees in a trap. On the walk home his father entrusted young Friedrich with carrying the caged animal. But when his father wasn't looking, Friedrich opened the trap to see the frightened creature cowering into a corner. The boy opened the cage to allow it to fly free. Not long after, war came to Germany, and Friedrich left the Black Forest for good.

*

Dore regained control of herself under a sun slung low over the saw-toothed horizon. Its wan rays shown inconstantly through the gaps in the trees above on the elevated portions of the island. She wasn't sure if she had lost consciousness, or if the steady drone of her companion's story had lulled her into a sort of meditative state.

“And that was the last I cowed to him or any man.” His voice was different now that she had the wits to notice. Obstructed like he was speaking with his mouth full. “The last he saw me as his boy. He had lived in the Black Forest his entire life but had never truly been in it. Only to take, to cut, to kill.”

She blinked as Friedrich's pinched face came into focus a few inches away from her sunburned nose. He was standing astride her body, hands akimbo and leaning at the waist.

“Good, you've returned. I've been breaking in my dentures while you rested.” He flashed a broad, unnatural smile down at her—his rust-proof false teeth glinting from a mouth unused to the expression. They reminded Dore of the metallic grills on the front of the taxis choking the streets back home in Charlottenburg.

“They look ghastly, put them away.”

“They're not meant to look one way or another, Dore.” Friedrich removed the dentures from his toothless mouth and returned them to a folded handkerchief from his pocket. “They are for grinding.”

“How long was I out?”

“Precisely as long as you needed. See, I needn't attend you for you to recover. I told you it would be so, you thought it, and made it so.”

“Well these spells *do* tend to pass once I have a lie.”

“As will the rest, Dore, you will see. Our first test—passed.”

“The rest of what? Where is Captain Bruuns?” Dore sat up onto her elbows and peered out at the horizon. “Is that the *Cobos* out past the breaks?”

Dr. Ritter stood up and crossed his arms. He looked out onto the water.

“She's set sail, back to the continent.”

Dore reclined at his feet, the backs of her arms and legs already feeling the sting of the hot sand from her fainting spell. They watched as the schooner moved farther out to sea—until it was just another dark shape on an unfamiliar horizon.

The pair made their way back to to the Norwegian cabin Captain Bruuns's crew had been stocking before Dore had fallen ill. The inside of the structure proved to be no more inviting than the exterior. Its walls and floor were coated with a thick layer of sand from the beach, and every surface was cracked and bleached by the equatorial sun. The air stank of masculine sweat and strange animals waiting further inland.

“Damn. They've taken it all,” Friedrich slammed the door of a cupboard so hard it flung lose from one of its ancient, discolored hinges. It hung beside his head, creaking and swinging like something alive as he glared back at Dore.

“Oh,” Dore said, and quieted the cupboard door with a bony hand. “I planned on bartering with the Captain for a table-setting. I've only now remembered I packed just the one spoon and bowl and so forth.”

“Never mind the crockery! We'll share what we have and, unless some great misfortune awaits, I don't expect to be entertaining any visitors.”

“Didn't you see them go? What did Captain Bruuns say?”

“No, I didn't see them go,” Friedrich grumbled over his shoulder as he inspected a bit of overturned luggage. “I was preoccupied if you recall. But it seems they left in a hurry once rid of us in any case. Look, the motor oil has spilled onto the books!”

Dore didn't look, instead she began a slow circuit of the interior of the Mother House. Head tilted back, she let her eyes wander between the splintered holes in the roof above. The wood seemed wet, though she knew it had not rained for months. The great rusted water tanks were just visible through the gaps, and she listened to the groaning music they made as they shifted in the breeze. Friedrich continued growling about their

missing guide Hugo—promised to them by Captain Bruuns—as he ripped at oil-covered packages of writing paper.

The cabin had seemed a dismal place to Dore upon first glance. Like a monument to old time, or things forgotten. The sagging chicken-wire, the warped boards, and rusted metal flaking off in deep red pieces like the tanks were bleeding onto the beach. But she was starting to see the fragile, aging beauty of a place left alone to age as it would. No people to bother it, make it stay in any sort of repair it wasn't meant to be in.

She stepped onto the porch and looked out over Post Office bay as the shadows from the volcanoes began to stretch a blue gloom over the flawless expanse of pearly-white sand. Only the glistening lava rocks still caught the last glimmers of sunlight. They lay strewn about the frothing shallows like hundreds of tiny beached creatures from the sea.

Dark shapes flitted across the sand down near the hogshead mail barrel. There were four or five in total, careening in drunken, elegant patterns across each other's paths as they danced closer to the cabin.

Dogs. She realized. Maybe the descendants of the legendary soldiers of the *Dog King of Charles' Isle*. Dore smiled—they were one of the reasons she'd warned to Floreana as their future Eden back in Berlin. She'd imagined an island full of bold animal companions and herself as some spiritual mother to them all. She watched.

The dogs on the island ran in ragged groups—not packs, it wasn't that organized. More like a gang of youths. They were always moving in and out of spaces. The cacti, the dunes, the shallows—in and out of the useless chicken-wire fencing near the cabin. As if they knew they had no place in the wilds, but were not welcome among Dore and

Friedrich now either. Maybe if they were all of animal or all of man, but no place treads lightly on those of both and none.

Dore laughed at their movements while Friedrich spoke aloud his inventory of their unspoiled belongings. She ignored him and tossed tiny shells and bits of lava rock through the broken windows to her new friends. They bucked back on their hind legs in human-like expressions of surprise, then hunched low to smell her scent on the projectiles. Dore smiled—there was something of herself she saw in their lopsided gaits.

“Dore, leave the animals alone and come help me count these. We'll be out of light soon.”

Dore met eyes with one of the smaller ones. In the low light it was like staring into a light reflecting off metal. Empty but bright. She searched them for recognition—camaraderie.

“Who are you waiting for?” she asked. She didn't know why the question came to her.

“What are you mumbling about?” Friedrich said.

The dog lowered its head and growled once—more of an impotent whine—then loped off to join the others further inland on the firebreak dunes.

They gathered there in a mismatched clump of fur and scrawny flesh. In the distance, high whining calls drifted from the treeline. These seemed more lonely, somehow, to Dore once she heard the sounds of the others on the island. They were ugly things, the lost children of the dogs bred to control and terrify. Once they may have had a breed, even names, but no more. They were nothings—no shape and no form—with

patterns of nothing across their colorless bodies. Like the dead, tangled carcasses of old plants behind the dunes that made the beaches inaccessible from most directions.

“Sharks.” Friedrich stood up from the luggage, squinting out at the bay.

“Oh.”

“Won't be doing those morning swims after all, I suppose.”

“Try to at least feign disappointment for me.” Dore tossed the last of her projectiles out onto the empty space in the sand where the dogs had been.

“It was a useless fancy anyway, you just wanted to ride tortoises.”

“And you picked, for our paradise, the only island in the Archipelago without the tortoises.”

“Again with that, Dore, you agreed on Floreana.”

“I didn't know that then.”

She moved beside the doctor and looked out on the dark water. Triangle shapes cut the gentle waves of the shallows—dim and uncertain in the gloaming. Fins, the rest hidden below the surface. The sharks swam a perimeter of the beach like a picket line. They barred any path back out it seemed. Saying: *you are here now, Dore. You are of these wilds now, hausfrau. What you left behind no longer in you.*

Again, the dogs cackled from the shadowed treeline up the hill. She pictured them like the sharks—stalking among the dry brush, their slouching shoulders visible over the dune swells. They walked a barrier inland—marking Dore and Friedrich as outlanders. Saying *go back, you will lose yourself here.*

“Friedrich, look.”

The ragged assortment of dogs coalesced into a more-or-less organized grouping up at the edge of Post Office Bay. They swirled a slow storm-cloud pattern around a taller, centralized figure. It was a man, or the shape of a man. He was slight of build and standing motionless among the manic gamboling of the canines.

Dore reached out to lay a hand on Friedrich's shoulder. For once he didn't move away from her "*feminine need of physical comfort.*"

The shadow man raised one arm to the sky in something like a gesture of greeting and moved the previously-unseen rifle he'd been holding at his side up to his shoulder. He started towards the the newcomers down the dunes in a confident, practiced stride. No stranger to this ground. The dogs parted sinuously around him like water moving around the prow of a ship, then followed in his wake as he came.

CHAPTER 6

"There is no cause to worry. The high tide of prosperity will continue."

—Andrew W. Mellon, Secretary of the Treasury. Sept. 1929

September 1929. Floreana Island, Galápagos Archipelago

The shadowy figure who walked among the wild dogs on the beach turned out not to be a man at all, but a boy. A fourteen year old native boy by the name of Hugo.

Dore and Friedrich had been told about him by Captain Bruun, and he was in fact to be working for the Ritters for at least the next month as a sort of helper and guide. He lived on his own on the island, apart from his hunting hounds, and made a living off the hides of the wild cattle that roamed the fertile hills of Floreana. He was under contract with Bruun, who came to port at Black Beach from time to time to gather the cured skins.

Hugo stayed with the Ritters for their first few nights on Floreana. He helped them carry a portion of their belongings from the Mother House to the largest of the pirate caves inland. There, the couple acclimated to the change in life-style before making the decision to set out to find a plot of land suitable for permanent settlement.

Friedrich claimed to want to get started straight away, but Dore begged him a small respite from travel while she recovered from the exhaustion brought on by her Multiple Sclerosis. The Doctor seemed to protest this idea only for show, and so they spent the next few days in moderate luxury among the weathered cut-stone cubbies and benches.

Hugo did most of his hunting during the day. He did it frequently and with vocal exuberance. On their last day at the cave, Dore had seen the boy disappear into the thorny brush as soon as the sun came up. She spent the day organizing supplies for the upcoming sojourn to their future homestead while Friedrich began his journal for his philosophical writings. All throughout the day she could hear Hugo plunging among the densely wooded hills—whooping in triumph after echoing rifle cracks, or calling out to his new companions about his day's successes.

This day, like the days before, the boy would not return until just before dark. A vexing thing, really, to Dore: the boy was under their employ to help them establish their homestead, but he seemed interested in nothing other than hunting all day. At night, however, he would set up his bedding as close to the couple as Friedrich would allow and wouldn't venture far from the mouth of the cave until dawn broke the next day.

Dore figured he must be lonely. He'd have to be, a young boy as he was living on this desolate island all alone for so long. Or else scared of the darkness all around them. *Or, not the dark, of the night itself.* It's a different sort of thing. Especially on an island like Floreana. Even the denser vegetated areas felt exposed somehow. During the day one thought little of this, but in the night there was a loneliness to the rolling landscape. Something uninviting but unseen under the sun. Like the animals that roamed the surrounding hills: they were almost magical to Dore, unafraid to come right up to the cave to visit by day, but by night devolved into unfamiliar sounds echoing off the lonely island's every dip and swell.

Dore watched the boy sleep on their last night in the caves. He lay half out of his hammock, an arm and a leg dangling among the unruly cluster of dog beneath him.

“How many do you suppose he kills during the day. Where does he keep the bodies?”

“Not many.” Friedrich set his journal down on his chest. “It's the skinning and curing that takes the longest. Once we've gotten settled I've agreed to have you help the lad cure.”

“Friedrich!” Dore rolled to her side to look at him. “Why have you agreed to this? We came here with plans of harming no living animal. Eating none of their meat. Existing together.”

“And so we shall, Dore. Except in this.”

“But why?”

“For Captain Bruun, of course.” He raised his journal back from his chest to read what he'd written earlier in the day. “For his continued friendship and assistance. The man has ownership of many of the livestock on the island, and is our one connection to any sort of reliable supply line.”

Dore rolled back over. If Doctor Ritter said they must, then she supposed they must. But she didn't have to like it. Didn't have to take such joy in the act as Hugo did. Such wanton killing all around them, day after day. Was this to be their lives now?

“How does he carry the bodies? H's just a small thing.”

“Skins them on the spot, leaves the corpse under the sun for the dogs.”

“Wasteful.”

“On that, Dore, we agree. I'll have a talk with the boy. If we kill we dishonor the animal by wasting it. Giving it to the dogs. Perhaps to eat a bit of it here and there would be more natural even, than our plans to go without. I shall see.”

Dore closed her eyes. More concessions made to their plans. First killing now the eating of meat. Were these not Friedrich's own values he'd taught to her. What else would they compromise for the sake of survival? Would they find out the things they could not?

*

The next sunrise saw Hugo preparing to leave early for his hunting, as was his wont. Friedrich stopped him before he could head off, however, and convinced the boy to guide them towards the volcanic mountain to the south. Hugo agreed but sulked for the first hour or so of their uphill hike. As the trio approached the foot of the gentle rise of the mountain, which proved to be more of an ancient volcanic crater, Hugo abruptly left them to return to his hunting near the caves.

Dore and Friedrich watched him plunge into the dense, thorny undergrowth with his hounds close behind. They were quite alone, and deep in the wilds of the island, but Dore suspected the boy would return before dark as usual. If nothing else, this could be counted on.

The pair pushed on towards the crater along the simple path. In places, the lava surface of the ground cut through the red soil like patches of broken glass. It folded over on itself like wave contortions and abruptly ended in jagged edges hidden in its own shadow among the black formations. The precarious ground made for slow going—even without the supplies they would need to transport over the same ground when they moved to their homestead for good. When the path was clear of the treacherous lava fields, the abundant thorn bushes that seemed to snarl and twist among all the greener things along the path had a tendency to completely obstruct their progression. Dore would wait, hands on knobby knees, as Friedrich took his axe to the maddening flora.

Before long, the direct rays of the sun turned the winding, rocky passes they walked into a sort of natural furnace. The landscape beyond a few paces became obscured by undulating heat waves creating an effect for the pair very much like moving within a dream. The heat was unbearable even in the morning, and by mid day had become dangerous. The Ritters stowed away all their clothing in their packs except their heavy hip boots and continued up towards the peak.

The pair gained the ridge of the crater and took a much needed rest. They looked back on their path and found that from this height they could see all the way to Black Beach, on the west coast, and if they turned opposite the infinite expanse of the Pacific to the East beyond the crest of the other side of the crater.

“Look at it.” Friedrich was wearing a rare, toothless grin. “See our world, and only ours.”

“But where will we make our home? How about—“

“Our home has not been found yet, Dore. I know this because we have yet to find it.”

With that, he hustled over the crest of the ridge. Dore wiped a hand across her brow in an attempt to keep the sweat from reaching her eyes—but only succeeding in transferring the moisture from her wrist to her face.

“Now. Look at this.” Dore quickened to follow him. *Because we have yet to find it*, she thought. It was times like this Dore wondered if she didn't understand what Friedrich was trying to say or if he was truly just speaking to hear himself. When she stepped beside him on the other side of the ridge, however, she immediately understood what he had meant.

They stood on a overhanging rock shelf which looked down the slope into the center of the crater. The mountains created a sort of natural valley on the crest of one of the lower peaks, with rock walls shaped like a horse shoe surrounding all sides except for a narrow opening that fed directly into it. The fecund valley was in sharp contrast to the dry, tangled jungles surrounding it. Dore found herself speechless as she stared down into the sea of nearly impossible green. As if on the island was an island itself—formed not of lava like everything else here but of life. And surrounded on all sides by its absence. *We have found it.*

Many people back in Berlin seemed to not quite understand the mind of Friedrich Ritter. His wife, Mila, certainly didn't. Dore's husband hadn't even tried. But moments like this reminded her, even when she doubted the man—struggled to understand what he was saying—his judgment and foresight would simply prove beyond the expected. Beyond the rational, some might even say, but that is what made great men great.

They exchanged no words between them, yet both plunged down towards the fertile basin with a reckless, stumbling pace. Friedrich with his bowlegged, hopping gait and Dore with her rolling, weak legged one. They soon found themselves surrounded by the verdant green of the scalesia forest. The giant daisy-like trees pushed up high above them, their thin trunks covered in furry plants that filtered the sunlight into a cool, mottled shade. Great vines reclined in the crooks of the scalesias. It seemed to the Ritters as if they had found some secret garden after all, some Eden as it were. They had come here to find their solitude, to pursue philosophy and knowledge. Dore immediately imagined herself walking among the trees here, her day open to whatever she desired from sunrise to sunset.

“This is it, Dore. This is home.”

“Yes.”

“I suppose we ought to serve notice of occupancy to make it legal. Some sort of ceremony.”

“Doctor Ritter, did you just make a joke?”

“I’m dead serious, this is ours now. Forever and for real—we are not camping.”

“Splendid. I can honor the occasion with a ceremonial dance. Authentic Floreanan.”

Dore proved true to her word, and began to dance in place there at the edge of the valley. Friedrich watched her with a satisfied smile, but did not join in. She spun in an irregular spiral, her weak leg causing her to stumble among the roots hidden below yet she spun all the same. Dr. Ritter crouched down and gathered a handful of water from a clear stream, which trickled at some volume through the valley and out through the opening in the crater wall. Dore ceased her dance as he stood back up. She breathed heavily, feeling her face flush but barely noticing the persistent ache in her leg.

Friedrich sprinkled a few drops of the water to the earth out of his closed fist. For a moment it looked to Dore for all the world as if he was squeezing his own blood from his body and into the soil. As if he was a man with water in his veins, feeding the land with himself.

“In the name of the Ritters, I take possession of this valley against all comers. With your own waters I christen you our *Friedo*. Garden of Peace.”

“No more caves.” Dore looked out upon the wilds of the valley.

“No more caves, we start at once.” The both were silent for a moment, coming down from their elation and realizing the amount of work that lay ahead to clear the overgrown scalesia forest for their homestead. They stood and looked out over what was soon to be theirs. Eventually, the shadows of the great daisy trees began to lengthen, striping the ground like gnarled, irregularly bars stretching the length of the valley. The sun was setting.

“I'm not sure if we can make it back by dark, Dore.”

“Poor Hugo. He'll be having a fit at the caves alone once the moon is up.”

As soon as she said it, the words brought to mind how isolated they themselves were. Despite herself, Dore scanned the deepening pockets of shadow made by the lush flora about them. Nothing outright sinister lurked there, but then, when did something sinister reveal itself so easily? Her eyes moved up the crater wall to the grassy rim. There, looking down from above into the valley, lurked the dark forms of several large beasts. They were at the very top of the ridge, outlined by a darkening sky. From her vantage point below, the animals seemed to be of no size or shape that they could recognize. Cattle-like, certainly, but all wrong in proportion and movement.

“The island holds no predators, correct? No dangerous animals? You read that.”

“Everything there is to know is not found in books.”

“Look at the size of them.”

For the first time since arrival, Dore considered the possibility that they very well might be killed by this island. By its weather, its animals, its heat. By its rains by its lack of rains. It was all too easy to step outside herself, to the top of the ridge where the great

animals were, and look down on the pair of them: two weak human beings alone and naked in a land they knew nothing about.

Dore sidestepped closer to Doctor Ritter. Above, one of the animals let out a loud, familiar low. They were, after all, cattle. Of course they were. The animals ranged all over the island, along with goats, asses, chickens, dogs, even wild cats. They'd seen many of them from the mouth of their pirate cave—from the porch of the Mother House. Every single one of them unnatural to the island, left behind by someone like themselves that could not last here. What would they leave behind them when they were gone?

“Only cattle, Friedrich. But they look strange all in shadow against the sky.”

“Only cattle this time. Who knows the next? We must be vigilant now that we have this place. Part of the having is the holding, and we will have to hold it. Next time we see shapes on the ridge it may be something more worrisome than cows.”

Dore glanced between her companion's determined face and the oblivious movements of the cattle up at the lip of the crater. One lowed again and began to wander away down the slope—*almost comical in the way it ignores us down here.*

A sudden crack broke the still air. A flash on the ridge, followed by echoes that seemed to come at Dore from all sides. The heifer above dropped into a graceless heap. Its head lolled over the edge and back down over the valley. From somewhere in the dark over the lip of the ridge came the familiar whooping victory cry of Hugo. He had found them before nightfall after all.

CHAPTER 7

“I am not one of those women who can stand things.”

—William Faulkner, *The Sound and the Fury*

“The fear felt by birds and other creatures is an instinct directed exclusively against man.”

—Charles Darwin

October 1929. Floreana Island, Galápagos Archipelago

The following month was spent clearing away the thick forest floor of the valley to accommodate the new homestead called Friedo. For her part, Dore made the half hour trek from the caves near Black Beach and the chalet at Post Office Bay to the crater multiple times a day, every day, hauling various boxes and trunks of the supplies the Ritters had brought with them to Floreana. Often Hugo would accompany her, but only between his impromptu hunting trips—during which he would abandon what he'd been carrying only to disappear until nightfall, where he'd emerge from the wilds with multiple cow hides in tow. Friedrich helped sporadically, but mostly concerned himself with felling the spindly scalesias that choked the valley when he was not drawing plans for their future home.

His original plans called for a largely traditional, solid build made from the surrounding timber of the valley. Its primary function would not be one of comfort or

luxury, but of harmonization with the island and of protection from the climate. This soon proved to be too much of an undertaking with the available materials and manpower, so Friedrich had scaled back his plans significantly over the last month—focusing instead on a temporary shelter to unburden the settlers from the exhausting trek to and from the pirate caves.

Their efforts were further delayed when, returning from one of her endless supply runs from the Mother House, Dore fell to the ground mere feet from their new shelter in the valley. Despite Friedrich's admonishments, she found she couldn't take another step no matter the effort.

“One foot, then the other, Dore. It is hard, but it is worth it because it is hard. This whole island is hard, what we are doing. This whole life is hard. If you make it yourself it all becomes easier from here.”

“I'm trying. I can't feel them, my feet feel as if they just aren't there.”

Dore sat down on one of the many felled tree trunks near the clearing that was rapidly shaping into Friedo. She pulled off one of the wooden clogs Friedrich had made them after the soft leather shoes he'd constructed for them in Berlin had been torn to shreds on the jagged fields of lava rocks covering the island. Once bared to the cool, shaded air of the valley, Dore's feet began to regain their feeling. A welcome return at first, but then followed by an intense and throbbing pain. Her feet had swollen to nearly twice their normal size.

“This is a catastrophe.” Friedrich crouched down beside her, handling her foot with surprising care. “How did I not notice this earlier? Why did you not say anything?”

Dore found herself speechless. She had expected a lecture on loafing or shirking responsibility, which Friedrich so often gave. Instead, he seemed more concerned about this than even her condition when he had treated her for Multiple Sclerosis back in Berlin. She considered this: perhaps it was not so strange. The man was unusually concerned with feet and footwear after all. Much like he was about teeth and human hair.

Hugo wandered up behind Dore as Friedrich examined her. The boy bent at the waist and peered down at her feet.

“The rocks couldn't have done this to your feet,” Ritter said. “This must be one of those damned thorn bushes along the paths, maybe some sort of poison to cause them to swell this way.”

Dore's heart jumped at the word “poison”. She'd agreed with Friedrich to travel to their Eden without an extensive collection of medicines in the pursuit of proving his Nietzschean theory of the “will to mend”. To prove the perfection and power of man unencumbered by the unnatural. This had sounded heroic—a grand and important undertaking—to Dore back in Charlottenburg. Here in Friedo, surrounded by no one save Hugo and the cattle for hundreds of miles, she started to wonder why she had listened to the man about the medicines those months ago. About any of it. He'd also said that a man's gums could toughen to be able to masticate without the help of teeth—she hadn't seen him achieve this once without the help of his steel dentures.

“Not the thorns, Doctor. Nigua. Sand flea.” Hugo walked off shaking his head.

Friedrich watched him go, then turned back to Dore's feet. Underneath the skin, he found eggs laid by the fleas. These eggs released some sort of poison into the blood

causing infection and festering sores. As the afternoon went on, Dore found this out in no uncertain terms.

“Just get them out,” Dore said. Once she had learned of the presence of the eggs in her feet she could barely stand to exist in her own body. She felt as if it, which had already been stolen from her partly by the M.S., was being claimed by the Nigua.

“It will hurt. I have nothing to give you for the pain.”

“Just do it.”

“Look at me, Dore. It will be excruciating, but I will get them out. You will live. This you will overcome and be stronger for it. Look at me.”

Friedrich extracted thirty two sand fleas, along with their eggs, over the course of the next hour. Hugo returned at one point, before the sun had start to set, but upon walking onto the scene turned right back around and disappeared into the forest.

Once the creatures had been removed from Dore's feet, Friedrich and Hugo continued the work of preparing Friedo for habitation. Dore rested much of the time—when the swelling began to subside her companion propped her up against one of the scalesia trees so that she could assist Hugo in curing the hides he continued to bring in at a steady pace. Within days she was able to walk again but was hesitant to make the journey back down the path to Black Beach, the path where she had picked up her infestation the last time.

Friedrich insisted she return, however. He praised her resiliency and strength for overcoming the sand fleas, but maintained that her final triumph of will was in the doing of the thing again. Always in the doing.

“But, it's not the same for you and Hugo. They didn't burrow into you. They stay away. If I go down that same path I'll be off my feet for another week. More this time, I'm sure of it.”

“Listen to me: they will not do so again.”

“How can you know that? We have no repellent, nothing.”

“You have your mind, Dore. A substantial mind, so remarkably like my own that it astounds me still. No repellent, you have your intensity of consciousness. Go back down the path, and know you will not be set upon by the pests, know that if they bite they will not break your skin. Concentrate and know. And it will be so.”

Dore eventually followed his advice, skeptical though she was, for there was no reasoning with him on such things. She followed the path, watching her still-tender feet intensely, focusing every inch of herself on keeping the sand fleas out of her body. It wasn't until she returned safely to Friedo that she allowed herself to admit it had worked.

She continued this method for all subsequent trips. Remarkably, as Friedrich had predicted, she was never again set upon by the Nigua. Aside from a few times, that is, but Friedrich assured her that this was because she had faltered in her mental self defense.

*

Friedo continued to develop in its gradual, frustratingly slow pace on into November. One particular hindrance was the lack of any transportation vehicle—either for clearing land or transporting supplies. While Dore and Friedrich had thought to bring chickens, cats, and all manner of writing materials they had neglected to secure something as simple as a wheelbarrow. As a result, much of the landscaping was done with shovels and buckets. This problem was fortuitously solved when the Ritters found

themselves entertaining their first visitors to the island in the guests and crew of the the pleasure yacht *Mizpah*, commanded by Commodore Eugene McDonald Jr.

Hugo immediately disappeared on arrival of the newcomers, who arrived at the homestead with a curious amusement. They were eager to praise the efforts the Ritters had made on the dense forest with such rudimentary supplies, and McDonald gifted them with a wheelbarrow and dynamite to aid in their efforts. The latter was only surrendered once Friedrich convinced the Commodore in his background as a student of Chemistry.

With his new tools, Friedrich made quick work of the remaining stumps and stones that needed clearing. His mood had brightened ever since McDonald had left his gifts, with the Commodore promising to return again as soon as he could with more useful items. Dore, however, found herself falling back into old habits. Falling back into the cloying, trapped depression she felt in her house in Charlottenburg with her husband. A life that now felt as if it belonged to another person—or, if not another person, another version of herself. She saw that returning now, locked as she was again in the routine of her day to day. Friedrich would not even let her use his wheelbarrow for the transportation of their supplies up from the beach.

Dore would stare at it during the day from underneath the sparse temporary shelter they had erected. Half filled and stationary—Friedrich would sometimes not touch the wheelbarrow for an entire day. Yet, still she would be forced to carry trunks and boxes on her back like a pack mule. Concentrating her will on her aching feet, listing to the sides of the path always with her ever-present limp.

In these moments Dore would allow herself to day-dream an end to all this uncomfortable hardship. Dream of soft beds and an never again having to complete her

daily commute across the island. And beyond that, beside her fellow Crusoe and their very own Friday, she felt fathomlessly alone in the valley. Nothing but sheer determined will kept her from chartering the next ship that took harbor. A different sort of person may have persisted out of a fear of the dreaded “I told you so” that friends and family were so quick to deploy. Women especially were vulnerable to this—and would often persevere long after good reason told them to stop out of sheer prideful defiance. Dore was not such a person. She had simply set out to do a thing, and the doing was still yet to be done.

The Ritter's house was finished not long after their homestead had been sufficiently cleared of the more intrusive vegetation. The heartwood, so readily available in the valley, had proven too resilient to build with, so Friedrich had instead finished their temporary structure with walls of acacia. This construction, while adequate for its first climate test during a short downpour, became an altogether new problem when it had dried out again. One morning, after a particularly wet night, the Ritters awoke to a cracked, curling house grasping around them like trembling fingers. The warping of the wooden bones of the home had forced the building into the shape of a rotunda. Eventually Friedrich decided on abandoning walls completely, for they were useless with all the cracks from the drying process, and instead transformed the house into a sort of roof on stilts with walls of canvas cloth and mosquito netting.

It wasn't much protection from the elements, but then it didn't need to be. The weather on Floreana was mostly mild, allowing the Ritters to spend all hours of the day nude. Animals made appearances from time to time, especially once Dore's garden began

to come in, but the pair never felt as if more protection was needed from the surrounding wilds.

Until they lost Hugo, and the island suddenly became a vastly bleaker place.

*

It happened on one of the tense, anxiety-filled days on which Captain Bruun was scheduled to arrive in the bay with goods the Ritters had ordered on a previous visit. Hugo accompanied them down to the beach in anticipation of his usual transaction with the Captain regarding the cattle hides he collected for the man. The pair of settlers and their native companion waited for the ship until it was clear that it had been delayed. At this point, Hugo asked leave of the Ritters to take down one last calf before the *Manuel y Cobos* arrived.

Friedrich agreed to the request, to Dore's half-hearted protestation. To her it seemed just one more useless slaughtering out of simple boredom. Doctor Ritter didn't say it, but Dore suspected his acquiescence was due to the need he had to remain in good graces with Bruun. As if denying him one last hide might discourage the Captain from continuing the deliveries on which the Ritters grew more and more reliant. Friedrich didn't seem to want to admit to this, and Dore found broaching the topic would often push him into his more prolonged bouts of unpleasantness.

The pair accompanied Hugo on his hunt, being that they had absolved themselves on any homesteading duties for the day. They strolled along leisurely behind the boy, Dore trying her best to distract Friedrich from his darkening thoughts towards his relationship to Bruun, when Hugo abruptly plunged into the thorny growth on the edge of the walking path. They stopped for a moment—hearing one report from his old carbine,

followed by another—and waited for the now familiar *whoop* of triumph following the kill.

But it never came. In its place a shrill, decidedly boyish, scream filled the still morning air.

“The bull is killing me!” Hugo cried from the dense vegetation. The Ritters immediately dashed towards the panicked voice. The wild desperation of Friedrich's movements as he dived into the overgrowth surprised Dore so much that she nearly stumbled and fell onto the thorny grown below. He, as a general rule, was not all that fond of people. He only just tolerated her even. But now he tore through thorn bushes and vines, calling out for Hugo to hold on. Dore wondered if it was out of true affection, or perhaps an unspoken fear that Bruun would discontinue his supply runs without the boy on the island to encourage his return.

Dore broke through the trees and into a clearing just behind Friedrich. They were greeted to a frenzied scene of blood and motion. Upon their arrival, a bull far larger than any the cattle they had seen on the island thus far crashed through the opposite side of the clearing out of view. Hugo's hounds followed, jumping and biting and growling in one matted, rolling mass. Left behind in the stillness that followed was Hugo. His body—now painfully obvious that it belonged to a young boy—lay twisted in a heap on top of the razor-edged lava rocks. A bright red pool of blood was spreading underneath his armpit where he had been gored by the bull.

Friedrich rushed to his side as Dore shifted nervously from foot to foot. She heard the sounds of confrontation between the dogs and bull somewhere off in the distance, but sound and direction were not necessarily linked on Floreana, she had found.

“His left foot has been trampled, puncture underneath the arm, various bruising. Good lord, this tin can from his pack has been flattened underneath him.”

“Is he alright?”

Friedrich hesitated in answering. He grunted and Dore turned to see the slight man hurrying towards her with the broken boy cradled in his arms. She quickly moved forward to help in carrying Hugo, freeing up Dr. Ritter's off hand to hack at some of the more resilient patches of thicket.

The trio reached the footpath just as the the hounds, which had previously continued hunting the beast after Hugo had fallen, took up barking again. The sounds they made came from the clearing. It was unmistakable this time. Dore hoped the bull had not managed to injure one of them. When Hugo recovered he would be well and truly distraught at the loss of any of his hounds.

They put the boy down onto the center of the path.

“Do you think we can manage to move him all the way to the bay?”

“He looks like he will make it.” Friedrich knelt beside Hugo and rummaged through his pockets.

“What are you doing?”

“Didn't you see? The poor thing has two bullet wounds and a pack of dogs upon it. We can't leave it out here in such a state. It goes against everything we are.”

He loaded the cartridge into the rifle and returned the way they had come, back towards the clearing. Dore followed with one hand on the back of his shoulder—balancing herself as much as making sure she didn't lose him in the thick brush.

The bull was waiting for them in the clearing again. This time, upon their intrusion, it immediately charged across towards them—snorting mists of blood from its nostrils as it bore a hazardous, unsteady path across the uneven lava field.

Dore dropped first, landing heavily on one knee and opening a gash just below her kneecap. She had opened a wound previously gained crouching too close to a cooking fire the week before. Friedrich took aim and fired directly into the face of the rushing creature. It shook off the impact as easily as if the bullet had been thrown at it, but changed directions and retreated back into the jungle like it had before—followed by a slobbering, snarling retinue of hunting dogs.

Silence followed impossibly quick—as if the thicket had swallowed them all into a great, thorny-throated maw. Silence seemed to feel the clearing in the bull's passing. All Dore sense around her was Friedrich's ragged breaths as the two listened for indications of the return of the beast. It did not come back. Eventually, the silence drained from around them as if the clearing had been filled with some sort of measurable liquid. First the birds, nestled in the close-packed limbs above, began their calls. As the quiet further emptied from the clearing, the sounds of insects near the ground took up again, followed finally by the rustling of animals moving in the undergrowth out past the treeline. All the violence from moments ago already forgotten by the island.

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Friedrich and Dore tended to Hugo's wounds over the course of the next few days—and when he had mended, went to visit him one morning down at the Mother House where he had been convalescing only to find their patient had left the island. He

had set sail with no warning with Captain Bruun when the *Manuel Y Cobos* had finally arrived.

With Hugo's leaving so too went his adversary, the bull from the clearing. In the months following the boy's disappearance from her life, Dore often found herself thinking of the two of them while making the last supply runs to and from Friedo. Was his encounter with the creature some sort of punishment for his treatment of the bull's brothers over the past months? Some sort of balancing act enacted by the island to restore it to its natural state. From the stories she had heard of past abandoned Norwegian settlements, Floreana seemed to treat its encroachers with severe consequences for their thoughtless invasions. Dore wondered what the island had in store for them—if the Ritters could somehow be accepted into the landscape of Floreana the way no others, not even the native boy Hugo, could manage.

On one such return trip to Friedo, this time between the pirate caves and the homestead, Dore walked the donkey path singing to herself as loud as she possibly could manage. She did so in an attempt to warn off any of the local fauna nearby—to announce herself far in advance to discourage a repeat Hugo's misfortune. Making a blind turn around a particularly thick wall of jungle, she found herself face to face with the very same bull with whom the homesteaders had done battle months before.

It stood impassively in the exact middle of the path. Neither snorting nor charging—making no attempts to intimidate or retreat. If it weren't for the recognizable old bullet wounds she would have sworn it must be a different creature, so calm was its temperament. It locked eyes with Dore for a moment then looked away. It possessed none of the raw aggressive focus it had shown before. None of its mythical island-guardian

persona she had attributed it since last they met. It was just another lonely animal brought here to this island.

Dore's first impulse was to flee, of course. She even made a tentative first step with her bad leg back towards the caves. But logic won out. Four good legs versus two bad ones could certainly triumph in a chase, and she was more likely to kill herself on the jagged surface of the narrow path by rushing over it than anything else. So instead, Dore approached the animal, head down and watching it from the corner of her eye.

The bull turned and regarded her slow progression. Its face held not fury but a surprising indifference. As if it didn't remember her, or if it, did accepted or at least disregarded her as a fellow traveler on the donkey path. This terrifying creature, the bull that took Hugo from them, the invisible presence on every supply run since their first meeting, proved to have thought of her not at all over the past months. This pivotal moment in the Ritters' settlement onto Friedo unremembered to the animal—some small event in the past no different than all the others.

When she had passed it, Dore looked back over her shoulder. She had told herself she wouldn't but found she could not help herself. She saw the bull looking back at her, more of a casual regard for movement than any sort of real interest.

Dore took their shared moment as reconciliation. An accepted apology for their intrusion. Now that Hugo had gone, and his blood-lust for the local cattle with him, the creatures of the island would forget the fear they had learned for the settlers and could settle into a peace it seemed had never existed between man and beast on Floreana.

*

But that was not to be. The animal life on the island certainly didn't live at peace with one another, and it seemed to Dore that Friedo soon became a magnet for all their quarrels in the absence of Hugo's guns.

The mountain passes and crater ridges surrounding the homestead were scarred by fading tortoise paths now mostly forgotten by the wild inhabitants of the island. The giant tortoises were long gone, killed off mostly by the fires and hunting of men years ago, with any survivors inevitably eaten by the generations of wild dogs left behind when the men sailed away. Their great, bleached skeletons dotted the bleak landscape surrounding the Friedo like bulky reminders of the tenuous claim any species had for a right to exist there on Floreana.

Their paths remained, however, no longer used by the tortuga, but by all the other animals on the island. Empty by the light of day, the paths filled with asses, boar, dogs, and cattle as the sun disappeared beneath the sea. The often oppressive quiet of Floreana transformed into a ceaseless cacophony by nightfall.

Friedrich was quick to roar back at them, shaking his fist at the night. For her part, Dore found the sounds—if not soothing—reassuring. How could one feel trapped and alone with so much life frothing all around? To her the sounds were of life—of love making and raising young, of battles and triumph.

Once the Ritters completed the perimeter fence, the creatures of Floreana seemed to take its construction as a personal affront. Their night calls before, Dore thought, had been a welcome to the island. They had moved through the valley and among the settlers, living with them. The fence represented a barrier between the newcomers and the natives.

Friedo was here and the animals were out there. Humans and animals. Not one. Friedrich, for all his bluster, had never intended it to be so.

The asses in particular seemed to make a point to remind the Ritters of their distaste for the little fence. They would gallop in thin herds around the enclosure, braying and tossing their heads wildly. The cows lowed and stuck their heads through the fence posts. The cats mated loudly and distressingly from all corners of the homestead. Their hoarse, pained cries sounded to Dore like hurt women in the woods. She always had to just stop herself from going out into the night to look for them.

At last, after all the visits from strange animals, came the most upsetting of all. One evening, waiting patient and obediently by the gate, appeared Hugo's hunting pack. The hounds and never been particularly well groomed, but in the months following his disappearance they had grown even more matted and scarred. The poor things' ribs poked from their sides from starvation, their fur balding in places due to mange and sand fleas. The dogs, it seemed, had been great helpers to Hugo, but had not been taught to hunt for themselves. In the absence of the boy's kills they had starved.

The Ritters offered the beasts all manner of food they had available, but the dogs would not take any. They grew weaker each night until finally Dore could stand it no more. She retrieved Hugo's old carbine, *fitting in away* she supposed, and limped to the gate to finish exorcising the last of the ghosts Hugo's violence had left behind.

CHAPTER 8

“I am very sure he was a devil—one of the Floreana evil spirits ... which seemed to us fiendish only because they resented our intrusion.”

—Dore Strauch, *Satan Came to Eden*

1932. Friedo, Floreana Island, Galápagos Archipelago

It was evening in Floreana. Dr. Friedrich Ritter crouched behind a particularly substantial yucca plant at the edge of the garden of his homestead clutching a homemade detonator and staring at a hand of bananas resting on a pile of rocks over near where Dore had planted the yams. Beside him, in the moist mountain earth, lay a forgotten small-caliber rifle gifted to him by the American Commodore who would visit Friedo from time to time in order to film their odd, solitary way of life for an interested Western audience. Besides the Commodore, and poor Hugo, the couple had been completely cutoff from all humanity for nearly two and a half years.

Another visitor, more sinister in intent than the others, stalked the overgrown foliage surrounding Friedo's ancient, barbed-wire perimeter fence that summer evening. Of the island and evolved amongst the harsh, black rocks and labyrinthine thorn bushes that covered its hills, this visitor came not to film but to destroy.

Friedrich Ritter's blocky, work-calloused hands sweated around the wires of the detonator, his wild, Beethoven-esque hair framing his pinched face creating a picture of

some sort of mad, Soviet Revolutionary. He stared with deep-set, heavily-bagged, eyes into the thicket near the natural reservoir in the rock face across the garden. His enemy had breached the fence here before, and it would again once night had fallen.

Friedrich meant to commune with nature this day.

The intruder to the Ritters' Eden had first become a problem two years earlier, in 1930, when the pair's potato garden first started to bear fruit. The plot began as a modest thing, a few yards by a few yards, but soon grew as Friedo did around it, sprawling to the edges of the fence, fecund with yams and yucca in addition to the potatoes. This bounty, naturally, drew interest from the surrounding wildlife in its significant contrast to the bitter fruit of the acacia, which crowded the surrounding growth to the point of choking the life from the other vegetation. Indeed, it felt to Dore as if she could not escape it, so plentiful was the acacia that its twisted trunk even propped up the steel roof of her home. Which, while proving a challenge during construction, gradually grew to Dore's favor after the island's first severe rainfall had spouted lovely green shoots upon the wooden beams supporting the veranda.

It was during such a rain one night that Dore and Friedrich first noticed their garden had been marauded. The pair still slept in hammocks suspended between the living supports of their house—heavy sail-cloth tied down to serve as temporary walls to their open structure—when a downpour surprised them unawares. The fat drops impacted the steel roof with such a sudden and explosive force Dore flung herself to the floor from her hammock. Buccaneers, she was sure, had surprised them in the dark with cannon fire.

She crouched there low on the packed clay floor, listening as the cannons continued their barrage. Friedrich followed her presently to the floor in a cursing, spitting

heap. He was often a cursing spitting heap if he wasn't engaged in some sort of rigorous problem solving, and the current literal manifestation of his demeanor forced a smile onto Dore's face now that she'd come to the conclusion that Friedo was not, in fact, under siege by invaders.

“I've never heard such a racket,” Friedrich growled, still heavy with sleep.

“I suppose the garden should very much appreciate a proper shower.”

“I suppose my heart should very much appreciate a new roof. Come, we must see to the stove before it is ruined.”

Dore followed her partner in Eden through the sail-cloth and out into the garden, still in their meager bed clothes, where she appropriated the makeshift walls into a temporary shelter for the stove. Friedrich hurried back and forth with the dynamite as well, which had been left out since they had settled here on the volcanic crater's gentle slope. They'd just finished attending to their camp when movement near the wire fence arrested Dore's attention.

“Look there, Friedrich, something is at the potatoes.”

The doctor set the dynamite carefully down under the shelter of their veranda and turned to inspect the garden as directed.

“Honestly, Dore, this infantile affection you have towards every animal that wanders into the camp is becoming tiresome. We've already the cat and that donkey of yours, how many-” His all-too-familiar scolding was interrupted by the shape gouging at freshly spouted potatoes. It went at them with a purposeless, destructive abandon. Bits of stone and root and soil pitched into wet, night air amidst a chorus of throaty whines.

Friederich took a step back out into the rain. The dark creature froze in place, a single red eye glinting from the side of its head at the two pioneers.

It seemed to be no beast the couple had seen on the island so far—much too low to the ground to be one of the wild asses or bulls they would sometimes encounter on the path to Post Office Bay—yet, the thing was too massive to be one of wild dogs that would harass Dore's pet donkey from time to time. Besides, the Commodore's rifle had soon made quick work of them, and Friedo hadn't been host to the mangy packs in nearly a full year.

Dore stepped back, putting the low branches of an acacia between herself and the marauder. What evil was this? What fresh spirit of the island sent to warn them against their settlement? Had they not come for the best intentions: that of self-reflection, contemplation, and harmony? Floreana seemed to be giving its answer.

A shot rang out in the night—Friedrich with the rifle—the sound echoing down into the valley inland as well as across the beach and into the sea. Friedo has been settled in a valley on a hill with access to both sunrise and sunset, yet the idyllic site allowed for strange sounds to travel into their camp at all times of day. The invader grunted and shrieked its retreat back into the overgrowth beyond the fence. Its presence was heard in the area long after it escaped from sight.

And many nights after they were haunted by its other-wordly cries. Often Dore or Friedrich or both would sit long into the morning hours, back to one of the sturdy heartwood tree trunks that supported the veranda, clutching the rifle in clammy hands and staring watch over their diminished garden.

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Their visitor returned most nights, stealing yams and potatoes and ruining the fence before disappearing into the safety of its treacherous warren. On more than one occasion, the pair had even manage to shoot true with the rifle, only to have the thing shrug off the bullet as if they were simply an annoyance, and make its escape. Dore maintained throughout this time that the creature was no ordinary being of the island, but must surely be some sort of vengeful island spirit.

The matter was settled when the creature finally paid Friedo a visit during the daytime. Dore was hoeing a fresh row in the garden in the cool of the first light of daybreak when the intruder entered through a hole in the fence it apparently had created during the night. She didn't notice it at first, watching her from the depths of the predawn shadows cast by the closely-packed, twisting limbs of the palo santos trees, but when the creature set to rooting at the vegetables by the fence line its presence was made evident.

“Friedrich, a calf has ruined the fence there, by the reservoir.” Dore leaned upon a worn hoe in the center of the garden, drying her forehead upon a bit of cloth as she inspected their visitor.

Her partner joined her there as the animal came out from the shadows of the foliage at the edge of the camp. It was no calf. No, it was much too large, much too grotesque. Its black fur rode up in mangy, matted clumps—clay sticking to it at odd angles like ill-forged battle armor. It stamped and snorted, heavy tusks curving out yellow and stained from its wrinkled head. Hooves, ugly jagged things obscured by a near-plague of sand flies, beat at the ground, trampling Dore's precious vegetables with no mind to hunger. It was here for destruction alone.

“It's not a calf! It's not a calf!” Dore shouted.

Friederich passed her at a full run, roaring back at the thing. He was still making ready the rifle as their menacing visitor plunged back into his familiar escape route. This time, however, Friederich was not to be discouraged, and followed the great black boar into the overgrowth, and Dore could see them no longer.

For a moment after their departure the clearing of Friedo was utterly still—silent except for the crunching and snapping of disturbed plant life, which was Dore's only window into Friedrich's mad boar hunt. It almost seemed as if their primal struggle was happening in some other place or time, some other island that allowed such things. And here she waited for the victor to return a champion, entitled to Friedo, her home, even herself the prize as some sort of wild, island hausfrau.

Except, she'd left Berlin to escape all that. Perhaps the boar and the doctor would simply stay in the thorny thicket, wrestling amongst the bushes run to riot amongst the stacks of wood and weed the two settlers had placed along the perimeter of their garden. She'd be alone with her sweet Burro then, yet she could not imagine Friedo without Dr. Ritter's surly presence.

Dore crept closer to the hole in the foliage left by man and beast. She placed calloused hands upon her bare knees, for often the pair worked completely nude on warm afternoons like this one, and leaned over into the fetid warren. The stench hit her immediately—undeniably that of a pig, a large and virile one at that. Dore had read, in one of the countless works of naturalists and biologists that Friedrich had burdened her with before their journey to paradise, that the particular, overpowering, musty, old urine smell of the boar was a product of the males' testicles. Even the meat became tainted by

the foul things. The book had recommended removing them certainly before gutting or cleaning a pig, though it was rapidly becoming the opinion of Dore that perhaps she should have them removed from the boars of the island whether she planned to cook them or not as a matter of course.

She retreated from the entrance to the boar's lair, as Dore realized she now regarded it. Strips of heavy material hung drying from the gnarled boughs of a scalesia tree near the fence line. Dore selected one of the more damp strips and wound it about her face and head, leaving only her eyes and a mess of short, curly hair exposed. She imagined she might have cut the figure of a lit match or perhaps some sort of pale-featured Arab swash-buckler.

Sufficiently protected from the hog stench, Dore wrestled a wood ax from its place in a partially-split log and limped back across the garden to the hole in the fence, favoring her weak leg even more heavily with the added weight. If the boar exited again it would find her yuccas somewhat less accessible this time. She hefted the heavy tool onto one thin shoulder and waited for something to emerge into the light.

Friedrich's rifle cracked from within the brush, sending a flurry of chattering mockingbirds and finches into a gray, darkening sky.

“Ha, hit the villain,” he called from the darkness.

Dore let the ax fall to her side at his voice. Now that she heard him, she realized how foolish she'd been. There was no telling her reaction upon seeing Friedrich should he emerge from the foul thicket first, sweating and stinking much as the boar would have. Being that Dr. Ritter was the only physician for many miles, risking a thoughtless swing of the ax in the wan light could lead to catastrophe.

After the gunshot, Friedrich had the single expression of victory, followed by a lengthy and ominous silence. Dore scarcely had time to take up her ax yet again, steeling herself to follow her partner, lover, and mentor into the wretched breach, before he bolted from the depths of the cracked flora. His bare skin was scraped raw from the brambles, small white lines running across sun-darkened skin as if the island had left some forgotten runic language etched onto his surface. Behind Friedrich, there emerged a frightful chorus of sputterings, whines, growls, and a sound not unlike a woman clearing her throat.

“Did you get him, Friedrich?”

“I hit him, I'm sure of it. Right on his flank, but the beast seemed to take no notice.”

Dore followed Dr. Ritter across their disheveled garden and up onto the porch of the bungalow. His wide, pale blue eyes were shining even brighter than usual, his nostrils flaring with every excited breath.

“The swine barely feels our bullets, Dore, yet still we drive him from Friedo by will alone.”

“I think he should be gone for good this time. He is just hungry after all, not looking for personal vengeance upon us.”

“Nonsense, see how he leaves many of the vegetables after uprooting them? Let him return, I hope he does. This is a different creature than the others that have threatened the garden. The dogs, the asses. He eats our food, yes, but that is not his purpose. He wants Friedo for his own.”

“The greedy devil.”

“Yes, and I must admit I wish either of us had a taste for meat. A feast made of this Devil Boar would be quite a fitting way to celebrate our end of him.”

“Perhaps he'll stay gone.”

“A different sort of satisfaction then,” he sat down on one of their two hammocks and began to pull on a pair of trousers. “Why is the wash cloth wrapped around your head?”

*

For the following months, Friedrich and Dore referred to their nocturnal intruder strictly as The Devil Boar or, as Dr. Ritter preferred, Mephistopheles, King of the Devil Pigs. Dore suspected that Friedrich's insistence upon the grand title was a way for him to cope with his failure to rid their settlement of the bothersome creature. He most often used the honorific on the mornings when they'd happen upon the remnants of the beast's night time marauding. He'd shout and curse the hog for its infringement on their peaceful clearing, but never again did he follow it down into the thicket beyond the fence.

After enough evidence proved their lone rifle to be insufficient in piercing the mud-caked hide of the boar, Friedrich resolved to dispatch the beast by less masculine means. In a battle of man and boar, power versus will, it was clear the boar was the heartier of the two. Friedrich would never best the thing with violence alone. So, while peeling bananas for breakfast one morning, Dore suggested the alternative to their endless, physical confrontation: give the greedy beast what he wanted. The boar undoubtedly trespassed in their garden on most nights, leaving a trail of barely-eaten produce in its wake.

“We can quit wasting our bullets to no result,” Dore said, and tossed a hand of bananas into Dr. Ritter's lap.

The next few days were an exercise in both the pair's belief in the scientific method as well as their patience. When poison, hidden in the fleshy portion of a number of wild bananas, proved too fragrant to fool the hog, Friedrich next tried to mask its scent in pear-shaped mounds of flour and oil. Left overnight in one of pig's favorite marauding spots, the deadly bait seemed to be Dr. Ritter's best chance yet at besting his nemesis. Morning light, however, once again greeted him with failure. He awoke to the sound of Dore laughing beyond the sail-cloth wall hangings and rushed to the garden to see the fruits of his labor.

“Did he take them in the dark?” Friedrich asked, searching the moist soil for the mounds of flour and oil.

“He took them alright. Gone as if you'd never made them. Though I don't suppose Mephistopheles even noticed he'd ingested the cyanide.”

“I'm not sure why you are laughing. After all, it is your garden he terrorizes.”

“I'm just picturing what Nietzsche would say about all this fighting with monsters you've been doing, Friedrich.”

“He'd say 'good showing, Doctor', and 'that which does not kill makes you stronger'.”

“Well,” Dore mumbled, holding her sides with glee, “there certainly has been no killing going on in Friedo.”

“Perhaps, my dear, but he is a large animal. Our Devil Boar may have taken the bait back with him into the thicket to die.”

It hadn't, as it turned out. As usual, the pig hadn't come to feed but to destroy. What little of the poisoned bananas it had eaten proved much too little to affect it in any substantial way. The hog returned before nightfall as if, at least according to Friedrich, to rub the settlers' faces in yet another failed attempt to best him. Friedrich, forgetting all the lessons they'd learned from boar over the last couple of years, snatched the Commodore's rifle and drove the beast off as they'd done many times before to the mild annoyance of the hog. Friedrich's complexion had been overtaken with an alarming reddish hue, extending from his line-creased cheeks to his sinewy neck. Dore had lived with the man for years by then, and knew of his sometimes irrational and explosive tempers—yet she could not help herself from poking at his endless pride a bit.

She started by humming the tune of a German nursery rhyme by the name of “Hoppe Hoppe Reiter”. Dr. Ritter ignored it at first, bent over the rifle and cleaning it with more force than strictly necessary. He finally took notice of her antics when she began to sing some improvised lyrics involving the epic struggle between Dentist and Hog. The song was typically performed for children, and involved the foibles of a foolish rider bouncing off the back of a horse and into the mud. In Dore's version, of course, the reiter (rider) was changed to Ritter, and she focused less on mud and more on Friedrich's failed attempts to kill boar.

Dr. Ritter turned even redder upon realizing Dore's joke and stalked off to the other side of the settlement to eat his dinner alone. This suited Dore fine, and she continued to practice and fine-tune her song among the replanted potatoes in the garden.

*

The intermittent marauding of the boar continued through the summer until September, when Friedrich decided the frequency with which the garden was raided was beginning to seriously threaten their food stores for the coming winter. He spent more of his time than ever devising a trap for his nemesis—working with ropes, stones, and the hefty wood ax to create a figure-four guillotine trap baited with vegetables from the garden. Dore and Friedrich went to sleep the night after setting up the contraption confident in this final solution to their hog problem.

The sun, however, brought with it a sprung trap, but no pig carcass. The boar must have stumbled across the figure-four in the night, and upon discovery uprooted part of the mechanism before safely retrieving the food left out for him. Dore walked off from the scene to begin the days chores, humming the tune to “Hoppe Hoppe Reiter” yet again. Friedrich retrieved the wood ax from where it had been partially buried in the garden and used it to take apart the remains of the failed trap. The ax head was left behind, quivering in the heart of a tree stump as he rushed into the bungalow muttering to himself.

Dore watched from above , on their roof-top veranda, as Friedrich returned back into the garden some minutes later with a great armful of dynamite and a container of black powder.

*

Which was why the little German dentist crouched behind a large yucca plant, near the fence on the outskirts of his homestead, holding a pair of wires running beneath freshly patted soil all the way to a pile of small rocks and under-ripe yams. Beneath the carefully selected bait and shrapnel, four sticks of dynamite lay buried—sweating in the

summer heat. Dore watched the proceedings from the other side of their open-walled bungalow, keeping her beloved donkey, Burro safely away from the explosive proceedings.

Ritter had remembered the lesson from those months ago, when he'd tried to poison the boar with cyanide. Mephistopheles, it seemed, had an exceptional nose even for a boar; this time Friedrich was taking no chances. He'd left yams, potatoes and yucca—as well as dynamite—in the same spot near the edge of the garden during the middle of the day for the better part of a month. Every day the boar would come and have off with the produce. The hog was now even becoming accustomed to the smell of Dore and Friedrich in addition to that of the dynamite, though he'd always leer at them with one red, beady eye lest they approach too near.

So, as a result of this meticulous preparation, the two settlers watched as the overgrown pig approached his feeding spot in keeping with the month's routine. Friedrich timed his move to the observed actions of the hog, waiting for the villain to engulf itself fully in its lunch of yams and black powder. Dr. Ritter spoke something quietly to himself and Dore placed her hands over the donkey's ears and winced.

The little clearing that made up the confines of Friedo shook with the force of the blast. Birds, dogs, wild asses, and cattle all set to shrieking in the noon sun. The report echoed into the valley on one side of the homestead and out of the cliff wall opening down into Black Bay on the other side. Thick black smoke billowed up in amounts not seen since the boatsteerer of the *Essex* set the island ablaze with a prank one hundred years before. The strategically placed rocks were sent in all directions, eventually raining down about the garden like a volley from the broadside of a destroyer. Dore wrestled

with Burro before allowing him to dance off into the woods on the side of the settlement. Dr. Ritter, however, bolted directly into the chaos—unable to even wait long enough for the stones to land and the smoke to clear to inspect the fruits of his labors.

Dore watched the stooped, excited figure disappear into the dark cloud and could see him no longer. She waited, wrinkling her nose at the sweet, banana-and-saltpeter firecracker stench from the explosion. Floreana was suddenly intensely quiet following all the commotion.

Then, from the garden, erupted such a sound that Dore for a moment thought another charge had been set. Friedrich was roaring pure murder, and as the smoke cleared, Dore suppressed a smile at the frustrated dance he jigged in the depression in the soil where chunks of pig flesh should have lay.

*

The following night the two sat vigil on their veranda, but the pig did not return. Though Friedrich hadn't exactly slain the boar, he had at least succeeded in convincing it that easier meals are to be had away from the gardens of Friedo. It was all the little German could talk about to Dore—alternating between his frustrations in failing to kill the boar as well as boasting of his victory. Dore found it odd that such a professed vehement vegetarian could have been so overcome with such murderous thoughts towards what was essentially, after all was said and done, a pig.

“That was no beast of ordinary size.” Friedrich said, more to hear it repeated yet again than for Dore's sake. “No ordinary smell. The hatred it had, the animal intelligence. I swear it was sent to us as a test.”

They had been over this conversation in all its iterations a number of times since the boar had disappeared. Dore knew the script by heart. Next came the bit about the eyes.

“And those eyes. Those red eyes. You commented on it first and I didn't believe you when you said it. More the fool me. Almost a human evil in them. Eyes like no animal I have known. You know, I look out on the thorn bushes and I think, I think he may have well been—“

“The devil himself.” Dore finished his thought. She hadn't meant to cut him off, but it would have taken time for him to get to.

“Exactly, Dore. 'Beware he who fights monsters' indeed.” Dore raised an eyebrow though she did not turn so that Friedrich could see.

“I dare say we passed the test. Rid ourselves of the great beast and without any serious bodily harm to the oaf.”

The boar's eyes weren't red, it wasn't the devil, and Friedrich had tried his hardest to kill the thing over and over again. But Dore knew to be careful of fighting with monsters so she said none of these thoughts.

“He won't be coming around again will he?” Friedrich said.

“He knows better than to come near us,” Dore agreed.

An abrupt summer rain chased them from their perch—the familiar battering of the steel roof drowning out any sounds to be heard on the island. If they had stayed there a bit longer perhaps, if the rain had not come and driven them to bed, Friedrich and Dore may have spied a schooner languishing in the poor weather just a few miles off the coast of Black Bay below.

CHAPTER 9

“The world breaks every one and afterward many are strong at the broken places.”

—Ernest Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms*

August 29th, 1932. Floreana Island, Galápagos Archipelago

Friedrich had spent most of the morning in a sulky mood due to the boat that was currently anchored just off Black Beach. It wasn't the ship so much as it was the passengers upon it. Dore and Friedrich had heard rumors of a new family of settlers with plans to make Floreana their home; but they had heard this sort of thing before and dismissed it out of hand. However, it seemed as though their Eden was about to become much more interesting, as evidenced by the group of strangers transporting supplies from the schooner to the beach.

Dore was curious about the newcomers. Though they were a few miles from the coast, the open walls of the crater allowed for a decent view from the veranda down to Black Beach. She remembered from earlier correspondence that among the settlers was a married couple. Friedrich told her it was nonsense to care one way or the other, but she couldn't help but be excited for another woman to be on the island. Dore hadn't realized how much she missed the companionship of women. Dore didn't know how to measure this, but reckoned Friedrich to be the exact opposite of a woman as she was familiar with the definition.

Dr. Ritter hid in his garden, refusing to speculate about the newcomers. Dore thought his sour mood less to do with the new arrivals and more to do with their presence being a reminder of the newspaper article they'd received with their last shipment of mail.

It had been a particularly biased piece making light of the pair's undertaking in sequestering themselves apart from society as they had chosen to do. The article mostly focused on, with satirical reverence, the nobility of Ritter's endeavor as well as his philosophical prowess. It was particularly interested in his choice to bring a woman companion over a decade his junior (28 years old when she had left Berlin) for the experiment rather than his wife. In short, a perverted, short-sighted embarrassment. Ritter took it all as more affirmation in his decision to distance himself from the society that produced such writing, while Dore found herself stunned by her name being mentioned in the piece. Upon reading her personal information in the article Dore tossed the clipping away and collapsed into tears.

“What happened?” Friedrich asked. “Why are you crying?”

“This is the end of everything.”

Dr. Ritter never quite understood Dore's reasoning for why it was the end of everything. He couldn't understand the shame this could bring on her husband, who had been concerned above all else in keeping himself and his family name away from any sort of controversy Friedrich and Dore's lifestyle might create. All of the hurtful things Dr. Koerwin could have done to derail their plans, all the help he could have withheld that he didn't, now repaid by being pulled into scandal.

The newcomers reminded Friedrich of this because of the letters that were included in the post with the hateful article. The pair had been horrified to read this

collection of insanity from complete strangers from all around the globe. Delusional, crass, idiotic people obsessed with rumors of perpetual nudity and hedonism. Dore was filled with abject horror at the thought that some of these people might ever follow through with their promises and come to their Eden..

We've known no peace since the letters started to come. The couple rarely spoke of it after the initial bombardment of mail, but their grand experiment had felt spoiled once the outside world got wind of their story and made it a part of their own. Even if not in practice then in their own adventures of the mind. Now, when misanthropes and outcasts across the world dreamed of escape, they thought of the Ritters as a sort of model. Few had the courage to follow through.

After a morning of hemming and hawing Friedrich decided to go down to the beach and greet the newcomers before they decided to barge their way into the homestead of their own accord. Though he wouldn't admit, Friedrich must have been just as interested as Dore in finding out just what sort of people were these *Wittmers*.

Dore sat in a shaded spot in the garden and finished her breakfast of bananas and eggnog as the doctor departed down the donkey path leading to Black Beach. He had declared before leaving to not care what the newcomers would think of him but had changed into his best linen suit to greet them.

As Dore waited for him to return with news, she tried to imagine what sort of woman this Frau Wittmer might be. German, though hopefully not too much like the hausfrau she'd known back in Charlottenburg. Certainly a bit more like her then, a bit sturdier, to follow her husband to a desert island to start anew. Dore suspected they would never become great friends, no matter how few choices either of them had in

companions on Floreana. She had never become close with any other women, even those in her immediate family, though she never could understand why.

Friedrich was of the opinion that the fault lay with the modern feminine diet and choice of footwear. Dore was skeptical of this, but she had to admit he may have been on to something regarding uncomfortably heeled shoes.

When he returned almost an hour later Dore was waiting out by the fence at the edge of the property to meet her new friend. She was flushed from rushing about, only thinking at the last minute to put on a light frock dress to receive visitors. That would have made quite a first impression on Frau Wittmer: a sunburned nude woman soiled from the morning's work.

She tugged at the hem of the dress, uncomfortable in it after spending so many months without the feel of cloth on her skin.

Dore was disappointed to find that Friedrich returned to the homestead solely in the company of men. One she recognized as the Governor of Chatham, the man responsible for allocating land titles on Floreana, two others were Ecuadorean natives by the look of them, both of whom seemed familiar with Dr. Ritter, and the last must have been Herr Wittmer. Their new neighbor.

Her disappointment turned to mild panic as Herr Wittmer drew close enough for Dore to observe the particulars of his appearance. Friedrich walked alongside the Governor, clearly doing his best to keep space between himself and Herr Wittmer. The strange man was of middle age (a year younger than Dr. Ritter she would later learn) balding and wore a thick mustache and round, wire-rimmed spectacles. His shorts were pulled up high onto his stomach and the legs of which ending somewhere on his extreme

upper thigh. Most off-putting to Dore were the absurd bedroom slippers he wore for the half hour trek from the beach into the wilderness.

She could only imagine the wife of such a creature. If this was how these people were to present themselves she began to wonder as to the longevity of their stay on Floreana no matter their intention. Perhaps she would find female companionship far less satisfying than she had looked forward to.

“Herr Wittmer, this is my companion and fellow adventurer Dore. Dore, Heinz Wittmer.”

“Nice to meet you Herr Wittmer.”

“Likewise, Frau... Dore.”

Dore winced at the title—one she had been determined to leave behind in Charlottenburg when the decision had been made to leave the modern world behind. She didn't correct him though. It took a while to learn the different rules of the island.

The Governor also made his greetings, introducing Gil and Olaia, who accepted Dore's offer of spring water and then retired to the treeline as the rest of the party made an inspection of Friedo.

Dore strolled barefoot across their property as the Governor marveled at Friedrich's ceramic irrigation system and her verdant garden of varied fruits and vegetables. She energetically introduced them to her pet donkey Burro, whom Friedrich and she had rescued and nursed back to health after four would-be colonists left her to die following a short-lived attempt at settlement on the island. Friedrich moved in silence apart from the group, casting a skeptical eye on the interlopers, searching for signs of something Dore could not guess. She knew he disapproved when she became too excited,

but the novelty of guests soon overtook her fear of reprisal from him. She demonstrated the dance she had taught Burro in between her daily chores. The donkey reared back onto its hind legs and Dore grasped its fore-hooves, then, humming, she guided the animal along in a rhythm-less two step to the delighted laughter of the Governor.

All throughout their dance, Dore could hear Friedrich drilling Heinz about his intentions on the island.

“Have you met a man named Bruuns? Captain Bruuns? Did you ask for anything from him? Promise him anything?”

Herr Wittmer might have responded in the negative, but Friedrich was too agitated to give him enough time to do so. Instead, he stampeded right over the mild-mannered fellow.

“Are you a writer, Herr Wittmer? Have you ever or do you intend to write articles about me or your experience on the island?”

“No, Doctor Ritter. I nor my wife have any interest in that sort of thing. Though I must admit, we have read some of your own work that has been published back home with great interest. Your story gave us the idea to settle here.”

“Why are you here?”

“Now, Herr Doctor,” said The Governor, “I’ve heard you like your privacy but there is no reason to be rude.”

“Not at all,” said Heinz. “A man needs to know the intentions of those he’ll be living next to.”

“Indeed,” said Friedrich.

Dore left the donkey alone and moved to join Dr. Ritter. She roped a lanky arm through one of his and squinted up at the taller newcomer.

“Well, I was in the War, as I suspect you were, Doctor Ritter. And I suspect some of the same reasons brought you here brought me here. Some of the things you learn about people, about what the world's like out there. Things you see. Make living in the middle of nowhere away from all that just seem like the only sane thing left to do.

“When I read about you making it work out here, I knew I had to get my family out here as soon as I could. Away from all that.”

His answer seemed genuine to Dore, and judging by his relaxed posture Friedrich must have accepted the man's explanation.

“Well I hope you find Floreana as much as an escape from all that as Burro and I do here with Friedrich.”

Dore had made the joke about her pet donkey to brighten up the conversation after the talk of war. As she found with most of her jokes however, it seemed to confuse Heinz more than anything. He simply smiled and asked about their lava rock and heartwood fence construction, but for the rest of his short visit Dore could feel his confusion as to what to make of her in every look directed her way.

When the visitors left, Dore wasn't exactly glad to see them go, but felt let down in the wake of reality following her expectation. She nearly gave up hope in finding a friend in the wife of a man such as Heinz Wittmer, but scolded herself on the age old unjust practice of a judging a wife by the quality (or lack their of) of her husband. She certainly hoped no one made assumptions about her based solely on Dr. Koerwin's personality or, god forbid, Friedrich's.

“That went quite well I think.” Dr. Ritter began disrobing the minute they had gone.

“I suppose. A nice enough man, certainly not stupid. But that costume.”

“That was strange for certain. But no stranger than some of the things you wore when we first met.”

“That's just not true. He can have nothing untoward to report on us to his wife, I imagine. We were as hospitable as anyone could hope—do you think he will tell her so?”

“Dore, I have no idea what other people say to one another, nor do I have either the time, interest, or patience to bother with such nonsense. Finish with the garden, I'll be writing on the Veranda.”

Dore reached a hand out to run her fingers through Burro's rough mane. Heinz had said he planned to return later in the day with his wife. Friedrich, since learning of their new neighbors, had referred to their arrival as shrinking their little island even smaller than it already was. She expected the opposite might be true: that having other people nearby might in fact expand their Eden past the small fenced in plot it seemed to have become.

*

Herr Wittmer returned to Friedo as he had promised in the mid afternoon. The party was lighter this trip, gone were The Governor, Gil, and Olaia, and in their place his petite wife.

Dore was pleased to find that Heinz had changed clothes and shaved since last they met. He was dressed like a sane human being for this visit—gone was the days growth on his narrow face, gone the bedroom slippers and absurd shorts.

Before any round of pleasantries were exchanged, Friedrich asked the Wittmers about his mail, which Heinz had mentioned they had in their possession earlier in the day. Dore cast an apologetic glance at Herr Wittmer's wife, but noticed the younger woman seemed to have little interest in acknowledging her as of yet.

“This must be Doctor Ritter,” Frau Wittmer said. As she did, her husband threw her a playful elbow and hid what looked to be the beginnings of a smile behind his hand.

“Yes, let me introduce Doctor Friedrich Ritter and Dore...Ritter. This is my wife, Margret”

She looked between them and then back to her husband, brow furrowed. It seemed to Dore as if the woman had a burning desire to ask a question but felt the need to hold it in.

“So nice to meet you Frau, Herr Doctor.” She cast quick glances again between Dore and Friedrich. Her eyes lingered on the doctor's suit and Dore's frock. *She expected us to be nude.* It was Dore's turn to hide a smile. She couldn't tell if the woman was relieved or disappointed in finding them fully dressed.

“How long have you been on the island, if I may ask?” Margret's attention was now focused on Friedrich's course thicket of hair standing up stiff upon his scalp. His beard was similarly wild.

“Almost three years now; it is lovely to have visitors after so long.” Friedrich played the gracious host and ushered them into Friedo.

Dore followed along quietly. The new woman's appearance had unexpectedly cowed her. Frau Wittmer had a healthy youthfulness to her, quite the contrast to Dore's own fragile, sickly spirit. Though they were roughly the same age, Dore imagined

Margret would be taken as her niece were they seen together by someone who did not know them. She also had bright, beautiful eyes that took in the whole of the homestead with a curious confidence. She wore a white dress, a pink pullover and stylish panama hat. The beautiful newcomer now made Dore acutely aware of the simple, unwashed frock she wore and of all the scrapes and bruises covering her from head to toe.

Dore heard Heinz ask Friedrich about his home-made steel dentures—the silly things had become legendary through his writings he had published back in the world. Margret admonished her husband for bringing the subject up, but Friedrich was all too eager to dash over to the *cage* (a ten foot by teen foot mosquito netted area where they kept their beds) to show off his handy work to the Wittmers.

“Fascinating things. Probably the only ones like it in the world. I don't use them for chewing you know.”

He offered no explanation as to what he used them for, even though it was obvious that the Wittmers waited for him to say. Friedrich wasn't being entirely honest with them. Dore knew he used the dentures quite often for chewing, but usually only for meat and he seemed to be reticent to admit to anyone other than her that he had given up his plans for vegetarianism almost the minute he arrived on the island.

“Might look a bit strange,” Friedrich said, mouth full of shiny metal. “But I suppose you know a little about that, Herr Wittmer. What have you done with your slippers?”

“Oh that.” Heinz pointedly avoided his wife's face, which wore a very clear *I told you so* expression upon its fine features. “I actually had gone through great pains to put together a costume that I thought would ingratiate myself to the kind of people I

understood you to be from how you were described in a few of the newspaper articles written about you. Only one chance for first impressions they say, and I wanted you to know we were kindred spirits.”

“Good lord, man,” Friedrich said. “What sort of things are they writing about us?”

Dore could tell that his ego had been threatened, if not quite bruised, but she found the whole misunderstanding quite amusing. She let loose a sudden and honking laugh that quickly evolved into a lengthy bout of the giggles. Her pet donkey began braying alongside her before long, drowning out any further conversation being attempted. Margret Wittmer attempted to conceal her alarmed reaction to the outburst, but her stiff face and wide eyes betrayed her emotions.

The woman's reaction brought Dore's amusement to an immediate end. She felt silly and judged in a way that Friedrich, for all of his ill temper, never made her feel.

“Aren't you a bit too well dressed for the Galápagos Frau Wittmer?” Dore didn't mean for the words to come out as harsh as they did, but after her embarrassment was not quite apologetic.

“I suppose so, Frau Ritter.” Margret said. “Here, as in Europe, I shall always strive to look my best for a visit. Though I am sure you will see the inevitable apron or boots once we start work on our own homestead.”

Dore couldn't tell if her answer was an insult aimed back at her, but the woman's expression was sincere enough and so decided to play the welcome hostess.

As they continued their visit, Dore found it increasingly difficult to remain cordial as she wanted to be. It was something in the perfect German hausfrau specimen of Margret Wittmer. What on Earth could a woman like that been thinking when agreeing to

come to the wilds of Floreana? She was everything Dore was not back in Berlin. Everything Berlin told her she needed to be. Standing here in Friedo, her Eden, and speaking with a better version of her past self was creating a sort of dark panic inside her. She focused on Friedrich's lecture on the nutritional value of an all fruit diet to distract herself.

“...it really is the only thing for it. Longevity. If you plan on living one hundred and forty years as I will prove is possible with such a diet. That an isolation from the unnatural goings on of the world at large will prove more beneficial than all the advancements in modern medicine. Its why am so completely disinterested in any news from Europe.”

Dore glanced over to where he had pinned up the articles he'd gotten published about their lifestyle on Floreana. Friedrich had amassed a sizable collection, including—somewhat strangely she thought—the scathing article making fun of their endeavor together. It was their only bit of decoration in their humble home. She could only imagine the herculian effort awaiting Margret Wittmer in her attempts to domesticate Floreana as the good hausfrau.

“...I wear my hair long like this, sometimes I tie it up at my neck, I wear it long like this because this is how it is meant to be worn. Modern fashion is impractical, the Vikings wore their hair the very same way you see me wear it.” Friedrich had switched to a completely different subject again, as was his did when talking about himself.

Dore hoped Frau Wittmer's husband would be considerate of her in a way Dr. Ritter often forgot to be. In away her husband, Dr. Koerwin never was. To appreciate what she did and assist when she needed help—on this island especially of all places.

Dore found herself strangely protective of the comely young woman. She tried to imagine the taciturn Heinz ordering her thanklessly about as Friedrich now pivoted to informing the couple about his non-violent pact with the animals of the island. She wondered if Heinz would tell lies to his wife.

Fruit was then served to the guest for an impromptu supper. Papayas and oranges with the last of the bananas Dore had picked that morning. Friedrich immediately asked for any news back from Europe, inquiring about the political transformation of Germany they had been hearing whispers about from traders and American yachtsman. Herr Wittmer seemed to be surprised by his interest given Dr. Ritter's vocal disinterest of the world outside of Floreana. Heinz relayed the news with a dismissive vaguety—practicing the out of sight out of mind philosophy Friedrich preached so often.

“You escaped Germany at the right time, Herr Doctor. And we only just. The Nazi party had a significant victory in the 1930 elections. Then in June of this year, right before we left to travel here, Hindenburg appointed that ass, Franz von Papen, as chancellor to coax the right-wing forces and their public support over to his side for political gain.”

“So it has happened then. The Weimar Republic was never made for longevity.”

“Not quite yet, though the Reichstag has been massively weakened. It won't be long now.”

“What else have you heard?” Friedrich said. “Outside of Germany perhaps?”

“Isn't that enough, man? Honestly, we've couldn't leave fast enough. I've been sort of out of touch with the more current goings-on. The whole world's money is worthless

still. Is that far enough outside of Germany? Though it seems we were hit the hardest again.

“Ah yes, the Olympics. It's in America this year, Los Angeles, you know. Built this great town, the Olympic Village they call, it for the men to stay during the games.”

“And the women?” Dore said.

“Some hotel nearby I believe.”

“Shall we tour the garden?” Dr. Ritter rushed the visitors through the small garden pointing the native plants they had been cultivating these last few years. Bananas, which they had sampled earlier papayas, oranges, coconuts, guavas, lemons, and pineapples, as well as a species of a large species of yam with exposed, above-ground roots.

The Wittmers seemed the most interested in this display of anything they had seen so far. Heinz had many questions regarding the success of the European vegetables that had managed to take hold in the harsh, foreign environment. He strolled among the young date palms and examined them one by one, running a rough hand across the hanging bunches of fruit.

Despite the Wittmer's approval of their farming efforts, Friedrich repeatedly attempted to steer their conversation more to the theoretical. The logic behind the newcomers' escape to the Galápagos from the perspective of modern ideologue, their thoughts on the devolution of German society. Dore noticed his frustration, as well as Heinz's reluctance to engage in this line of questioning, so she turned to Margret to include her in the discussion.

“What do you think of Nietzsche?” she asked the woman. Margret responded non-noncommittally. The woman was no idiot, but seemed—as did her husband—to have no interest in such things.

“When you are content to be simply yourself,” Dore recited, “and don't compare or compete, everybody will respect you.” She had quoted Lao-Tzu in an attempt to reassure the woman in her lack of judgment towards her lacking philosophical knowledge, though upon seeing her exasperated reaction feared she may have actually furthered their disconnect.

“No matter,” said Friedrich. “We have the rest of the eternity to tutor you on such things.”

The Wittmers had no reaction to this, but the awkward silence which followed stretched on until broken by an alarmingly loud crunch as Friedrich bit into a raw sugar cane with his stainless steel dentures. Margret Wittmer jumped visibly into the air at the sound and shared a sheepish smile with Dore. She found encouragement in the conspiratorial glance—*no matter the divide between us we are still two women isolated among men*. The moment lingered for her, long after their visitors had returned to their camp down on Black Beach. It had taken the island becoming more crowded to realize just how lonely she had actually been these long years.

“We plan on four years to start.” Heinz Wittmer was speaking. Dore hadn't heard the context, but assumed it was the time frame for the couple's stay on Floreana. She couldn't imagine returning to how it was before they had shown up—the emptiness she would feel knowing they had made friends in the unlikeliest of places only to lose them just as quickly.

They offered no explanation to the four year cut-off and Friedrich pointedly did not ask for one. Instead he crunched yet again into the sugar cane, studying Heinz's sun-burned face.

Perhaps they themselves did not know. Neither their reason for being here or their hesitation to commit to their settlement as a permanent lifestyle. The only reasoning Dore managed to discover was that Margret was five months pregnant and planning on having their first on the island. She had agreed to come to Floreana due to the unique availability of a trained physician in Friedrich. Ritter was visibly annoyed by this fact and told them he had not crossed the world to continue with his practice.

The Wittmer's visit came to an abrupt end after the mild unpleasantness regarding Friedrich's role as the assumed doctor for the island. He did, however graciously volunteer to show them the pirate caves the following morning and to advise against some of the homesteading mistakes he had made when first they arrived.

They begged leave to return to Heinz's thirteen year old son (and Margret's step-son) Harry, who had remained at the camp on the beach due to his exhaustion following their long journey. The boy was unwell as it turned out, with rapidly deteriorating eyesight. One of the reasons for their move to this climate was an attempt to alleviate the symptoms of his illness.

To this, Friedrich finally found something to agree with the Wittmers. He complimented them on their good sense and foresight to recognize the healing power of a place such as this. A simple life. Though, to Dore, life on Floreana had been the opposite of simple thus far.

The Ritters waved goodbye to the newcomers as they left down the familiar donkey path. Dore found some small satisfaction in their ungainly struggle to traverse the treacherous lava fields that often broke through the red dirt. She remembered her first days on the island—how the very ground beneath her feet seemed to bid her to turn back around a leave. She wondered if they too would learn how to walk the paths of Floreana without losing their footing.

“What an extraordinary thing,” Dore said. “To bring a sick boy to a desert island.”

“If he survives, that boy will be the best of all of us.”

Friedrich popped the dentures from his mouth and walked back towards the house. Dore followed, immediately pulling the dress over her head.

*

Almost a month after the Wittmers' arrival, and after repeated requests to borrow Dore's pet donkey to transport supplies from their camp on the beach to a more permanent residence at the pirate caves, Friedrich finally agreed to loan out burrow for a day trip. That evening Heinz Wittmer made the half hour trek to Friedo alone to regretfully inform Dore that Burro had become stubborn during one of the supply runs and had to be left on the trail somewhere between Black Beach and the caves.

Dore was distraught, reacting nearly as much to Herr Wittmer's lack of tact in relaying the news as to learning of her loss. The man quickly retreated back to his family behind the hollow excuse of needing to finish the days work after the delays caused by the donkey. Friedrich might have been nearly as upset as Dore at this turn of events, though he only allowed himself to comment on how much of a blow to the yard work losing their pack animal would be.

She sat on on the ground in the garden, Friedrich working wordlessly around her as he made repairs to the damaged fence. Wild asses had unearthed the posts in the dark with their nightly circuits around the property. It was a testament to how much Friedrich must have missed their donkey too that he made no comment to Dore about shirking her evening's responsibilities.

All the drama and worry proved to be in vain. The next day, the eighteenth of September, Dore awoke to find Burro alive and well inside of her open pen set in the corner of the Ritter homestead. She was nonchalantly chewing at some nearby thorn bushes, almost arrogant in her relaxed appearance. Friedrich unloaded her of the Wittmer's supplies, which still hung from her back in unbalanced bundles.

“Suppose we tell them we found her unburdened?” Dore said. “Lots of ways to lose a pack out there. And it seems only fair.”

“Suppose we do.”

Dore spent the rest of the day with her beloved pet while Friedrich railed intermittently about the character and manners of the Wittmers. *So practical, so salt of the Earth*. She tuned out the rantings of her companion and danced with Burro across the grounds of Friedo until the sun began the last leg of its descent towards the ocean's infinity horizon.

She shut the donkey up in the pen and, as had become their custom, joined Friedrich to watch the sunset. The pair looked on in growing confusion as the sun disappeared beneath the waves but the sky did not darken. In fact, it began to brighten—glowing an unnatural and ominous orange-red.

They waited. The minutes stretched into an hour. Night seemed to have fled this part of the world.

Soon the source of the illumination revealed itself to be somewhere past Isabela Island, to the west. Perhaps past it on Narborough. The gathering clouds above the phenomenon reflected the shifting movement of flames upon their under sides. They changed from moment to moment like a film projected in the theater but in vibrant and nonsensical color. Gradually, the eerie yellow clouds spread out across the night sky to cover the entirety of the archipelago and Floreana was cast into an disquieted un-night.

A volcanic eruption. Neither Friedrich nor Dore voiced their concern, but both knew what they were seeing. The valley in which they had made their home, churned from the flat ground and walled in on three sides by the skeleton of a volcanic crater, quickly shifted from a place of pride and security to one of unnatural menace. Dore felt primitive, exposed like the first men must have felt witnessing the a lightning strike. They looked out upon the expanse of ocean separating Floreana from Isabela with blistered hands entwined. *How strange that one hundred kilometers—once seeming so impossibly far—could now appear no distance at all.*

They waited for a tremor of the ground beneath their feet, waited for the sea to rise up and meet them in their valley. Or for another eruption to the west—for the edges of Floreana to sweep slowly underneath the waves.

Strange and frightening as it was, Dore felt bound to Friedrich in a way she hadn't since before they had left for Amsterdam at the beginning of their journey. Felt their hands clasped physically, but felt a clasping of their minds in a way as well. A detached sense of safety in the inevitable destruction coming to them. *At least we have lived.*

They waited out the end of the world for most of the night, before retiring to bed still possessing of their shared calm sense of inevitability. They fell asleep in their separate beds, protected by steel roofing and mosquito netting, accepting and almost anticipating never wake to see the sun again.

Three days later sulfurous clouds still blanketed the sky reaching to the West. But for the first time Dore could draw clean oxygen into her fragile lungs. The calm return to normal betrayed a sinister subtlety to the days now. The sun had turned pale and sickly-looking. It hung in the air casting its light but with none of its former, life-giving shine. While the threat of eruption had lasted, Dore's depression had hidden behind the certainty of the short life in front of her, but after the danger had passed and life on Floreana marched back toward the mundane, she found her old shadow returning to nip at her heels.

There had been no earthquake, they found out later. No eruptions. The world had not dodged extinction in those short days. Just a great fire on an island they would never go to.

A month later the Baroness arrived and set light to the Galápagos Islands a third time.

CHAPTER 10

“That is what we are supposed to do when we are at our best — make it all up — but make it up so truly that later it will happen that way.”

—Ernest Hemingway, *Letter to F. Scott Fitzgerald*

October 15, 1932. Floreana Island, Galápagos Archipelago

Dore and Friedrich waited side by side in their garden to receive the second group of homesteaders with whom they were to be forced to share their island. They had received advance notice of the group's arrival by a rushing, panicked Heinz Wittmer—uncharacteristically excited by their presence—who had made a delivery of the Ritters' mail and beat a hasty retreat back to his family's home in the pirate caves. He had been in a hurry to make it back before nightfall and hadn't said much about the newcomers other than to warn the Ritters that they weren't going to like them.

Friedrich shifted through the post after he had gone. “It's been opened.” Dore accepted the letter he offered to her to illustrate his point.

“Herr Wittmer would never,” she said. “What is this about?”

Dr. Ritter turned the stack over to show more of the same on the rest of the letters. Every single one had been torn open, showing no attempt at guile in the execution, and closed back again with the smallest of effort.

“It seems we are being spied upon, Dore.”

“A spy would attempt to cover the deed, would he not?”

“A poor spy then.”

The sound of hooves upon the foot path pulled their attention from their violated mail and towards the edge of the property. There, rounding the bend past the gnarled thorn bush thicket, appeared small woman riding a donkey. She wore her hair short, as Dore assumed the fashion must still be in Europe, but had bleached it an arresting, unnatural platinum blonde. If Dore herself somehow felt incongruous with the natural wonders of Floreana surrounding her, this woman seemed at first glance to be a walking insult to it.

She rode the beast as if she were a queen and it her royal mount. As if she trotted the rues of Paris after conquering France rather than bumping awkwardly on an ass in the middle of the Pacific. Her expression reflected her lofty bearing—one eyebrow cocked in arrogant appraisal of her surroundings and a confident smirk bending a wide mouth possessing of altogether too many teeth. A an over-sized beret sat crooked upon her head. Her retinue of young men followed on foot beside her like an honor guard escorting their lordess.

Friedrich and Dore waited for their guests to introduce themselves or at least extend some gesture of greeting upon arrival, but instead found themselves in a strained battle of wills as both parties remained silent. The woman halted the group just shy of the garden fence, still wordless, and sat (lounged really, if that is possible upon the back of an ass) smiling her half-smile as she regarded the Ritters. Without any sort of prompting, a young man hurried from the back of the procession to assist the woman in dismounting. She never acknowledged him, never turned her stare from the direction of her hosts.

Once grounded, Dore noticed she wore thin sandals upon her bare feet. There was no trace of dirt or mud on them. The woman must have been carried to shore and then set directly upon the back of her donkey. She then strode forward, her hips swaying luridly underneath a pair of baggy men's overalls. Her attendant rushed forward, past Friedrich and Dore, past the garden, and directly onto the veranda where he took hold of one of the deck chairs and dragged it around to face the donkey path. His mistress followed, much more slowly, until she too had reached the house, and slid into the chair with a satisfied, suggestive moan. As if she had walked the long journey across the island from Post Office Bay rather than ridden.

“What a marvelous little plantation you've made here. You must be the Ritters I've read so much about. I'm charmed to be the Baroness Eloise Wehrbornde Wagner-Bousquet, hotelier and entrepreneur. Paris by way of Constantinople. So nice to meet you.” She held out a delicate, limp wrist.

Friedrich was, for perhaps the first time since Dore had met the man, speechless. Dore moved forward, however and shook the woman's hand with both of hers. She felt a flash of satisfaction at the annoyed look on the Baroness's face after being denied the kiss she had evidently expected. If this woman thought to come onto their land and claim it as her own, she was going to find it would take more than simply claiming a seat before being invited.

Still, Friedrich and Dore were forced come and sit around her to receive their guests. Perhaps she had won the first battle of what was appearing might soon turn into a war over the island. Her retinue followed the Ritters to sit on the ground in a rough semi-circle facing the Baroness. The small blonde one who had fetched the chair for her

crouched right beside her. She rested a hand upon the back of his neck and absent-mindedly ran her fingers through his hair.

Dore had assessed this woman's game almost as soon as she came into view. She watched the sensual movements of the Baroness's hand upon her attendant; with men she would play the seductress. The woman had, she realized now, yet to either look at or address Dore. She focused all of her queer intensity directly upon Friedrich. Had addressed all her words of greetings to him. To Dore, and she expected to most other women, her weapon would be intimidation. Of her sophistication, of her names and titles, her verbosity. Of her sexuality and power over men.

This would have worked on Dore back in Berlin. Would of worked on her husband, Dr. Koerwin. But Friedrich was not her husband and Floreana was not Berlin.

The Baroness dominated the conversation for the early part of her visit. She complimented every inch of Friedo, but always managed to insinuate some hidden jab with each observation. Dore thought of her misshapen cloche hat—the some way women hid their insults when they actually meant them. Dore couldn't stand such women, their world dominated by the four walls around them. Confident and judgmental yet unable to recognize their own small horizon. Using domesticity and expectation to keep one another confined. This Baroness, for all Dore imagined she would soon find distasteful in the woman, was at least no cowed hausfrau. If she was to be an opponent, she might at least be a worthy one.

“I feel as if I'm visiting the Zulu section of a world's fair.” She reached out a hand to pluck at the misquito netting hanging from the steel sheets of the roof.

Dore laughed at this—such an odd thing to say. Much of what the Baroness commented upon left the Ritters speechless, and with Friedrich having become suddenly taciturn since the visitors had arrived, Dore found herself trying to fill the awkward silences after she'd commented on this “*adorable contraption*”, or that “*funny tool*.”

Dore glanced over to Friedrich to gauge his level of frustration with the woman's emasculating observations concerning his inventions. She was annoyed to find he'd actually turned his back upon the Baroness and begun directly addressing the men in her party. He left Dore to attend to the horrible woman while he traded sea-voyage tales with the others. The men followed him off to the other side of the property where he pointed out his ceramic irrigation and shower system, leaving Dore with the Baroness and her young servant, who apparently never strayed far from arm's reach.

The man fretted about her in a way that reminded Dore of Hugo's hunting hounds' single-minded loyalty. His face held the pathetic light of unrequited devotion. Dore had never seen such subservience in a man and found the whole situation unnatural and repugnant. His name, it turned out, was Rudolf Lorenz, though the Baroness never referred to him by anything other than the boyish “Rudi”. And even when she addressed the pitiful fellow only did so to sing moaning instructions to him. When dealing with Lorenz she transformed from her regal, commanding persona into that of a spoiled child.

“Rudi darling, there's a stone in my sandal—get it out for me!” To which the young man would respond by kneeling at her feet to do her bidding.

He obeyed with almost a rapturous eagerness, as if commanding her attention, even to be issued petty orders sustained his delicate frame. Lorenz seemed a sweet enough type, but Dore found she could barely hide her discomfort at a man behaving in

such a submissive manner. She had to look away at one point when the Baroness had him pluck the eyeglasses from the bridge of her nose rather than remove them herself.

Dore examined the man as the Baroness prattled on about her family ties to Austrian royalty and her previous life as a spy working out of Constantinople during the war. She had first taken Lorenz for a youth, a boy of twenty perhaps. But after inspecting him closer it was clear he was closer to thirty. She recognized the shape of a chronic illness in his posture and bearing—his round, boyish shoulders and thin frame. Lorenz was polite to her, speaking when spoken to and acting quite normal for the circumstances. But if this ever persisted too long the Baroness would imagine some new desire that needed tending to and would bring the man to heel.

Friedrich returned with the men before too long to catch the end of the Baroness's lengthy recounting of her life story. For all her less charming qualities, the woman had an air for the dramatic. Though she believed barely a word of it, Dore had to admit she could tell an entertaining story and was possessing of an alluring, exotic voice.

Dore's beloved pet donkey, Burro, broke into the conversation with braying demands for dinner. Lorenz rose and accompanied Dore in the feeding, and when they returned to the veranda were met with a venomous, inquiring stare from the Baroness. Dore noticed that the man responded with a shake of his head before taking his place back beside her. Dore wasn't sure what had been communicated between the two, but had the chilling thought that information about some aspect of the Ritters' inventory may have been relayed in the wordless exchange.

Darkness fell and the Baroness's party had still not taken leave. Upon seeing the shadows of the scalesia trees lengthen across the yard the Ritters' guests moved as if to

say their farewells for the evening. Friedrich remained silent, a heartbeat away from actually tapping his foot with impatience for the guests to go. Dore took pity on them, however. The night was a living thing on the island—thick and moving. Obscuring of sound and distance. Something not to be braved by newcomers—no matter how important they thought themselves.

“Stay the night,” she said. “We've had so few guests over the years, and your camp is so far away. We've homemade mattresses and hammocks and enough for everyone.”

The Baroness accepted their offer on behalf of her entire retinue. The group settled in for the night, some even claiming Friedrich and Dore's own beds, which they offered as well. Both planned to read and write responses to the mail they had received earlier in the afternoon, and thus were not planning on sleeping before sunrise. Exhausted from the last leg of their journey, the newcomers drifted off to sleep before the Ritters had begun to put pen to paper.

*

In the small hours of the morning the Baroness began to toss and turn restlessly in her hammock. Dore looked up from her letter she had been writing to her mother to notice the woman curled in the hammock as if in pain, clutching to her chest a hardbound copy of the book *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Dore checked the rest of the guests; no one else in the small home appeared to have been disturbed by the woman's movements. She moved to continue her correspondence but was again interrupted by an intermittent round of light coughing coming from the strange woman's hammock. Dore watched as she stopped, raised her head to peer over at Lorenz's still-sleeping form, then coughed again.

She continued this for some time, her hacking becoming progressively worse as those around her continued not to ignore her.

Friedrich caught Dore's eye and pointedly turned back to his writing. Dore followed his lead. He must have been under the same opinion that she was: this was nothing to be concerned with, a poorly acted, hysterical imitation of an illness. Dore couldn't tell if the woman was simply attempting to claim dominance over Friedrich by tricking him into caring for her as a physician and thus making him work for her, or if the performance was some sort of payback for him stealing the men in her retinue's attention away from her earlier in the evening.

Whatever the case was, it did not work. Neither Dore nor Friedrich gave the Baroness a moment's attention, and her companions, it seemed, were wise to her intentions and paid her no mind. Eventually Lorenz moved to the ground beside her hammock. Dore allowed herself a bit of pride for the man, so long as he was holding out before finally going to her. Just a bit of pride though, for soon their rapid whispers disrupted all her attempts at finishing her letters and she was forced to abandon them entirely.

When the young man asked if Dore could make "Madame" a pot of tea, for she was chilled to the bone, Dore flat-out refused and sent him back to his shivering mistress. Dore grinned at the thought of the insufferable woman playing up the chill so much that she jittered herself right out of the hammock and onto the cold ground. But there was no such luck, she remained secure and suspended with "Rudi" gently rocking her from side to side.

*

The visitors left early the next morning, eager to return to Post Office Bay and begin preparing the building site for what the Baroness referred to as *The Hacienda Paradiso*. True to the unpleasant performance during the night, their departure was not without melodramatic incident.

“Doctor Ritter,” said Lorenz. “I thank you for your food and for your bed. Friedo is a place like no other, a sight to see. Coming to Floreana and not meeting with you would be like going to Rome and not visiting the Pope.”

Friedrich shook the man's hand, thanking him for his kind words and welcoming the man back to Friedo whenever he wished. This small thing, however, sent the Baroness into such a shrieking rage one rarely sees outside of secondary school tantrums.

“The Pope indeed. The Pope of what—of thorns and donkeys and crumbling houses with no walls?” Lorenz, the sweet man as Dore was beginning to think of him, put a calming hand upon her shoulder but she shrugged it off.

“The Pope and his pet mule, Frau Pope. You love it so much here, Rudi, darling, why don't you stay in this hole with them. You can share the pen with the mule. The Hacienda only caters to the best of people. You won't be allowed in the door when its through. Not even if you bring the Pope!”

“Some talk for a Baroness, *Eloise*.” Friedrich stared her down as the fuming woman stomped out of the yard and back towards the donkey path.

Valdi hesitated for a moment, waiting for her lapdog, Lorenz, to follow her out of earshot. “She's not a real Baroness you know. None of us believe that title is real. Except maybe Rudi, but he doesn't know what to do anymore, poor fellow.” He the waved once

and hurried to catch up with the rest of the group, which had already moved to the edge of the Ritters' property.

The Baroness and her attendants had not been gone five minutes when Heinz appeared once more from the path to the pirate caves. The stoic old soldier hadn't seemed like he would have been particularly interesting company when Dore had first met him, but he was turning out to be a fairly prolific busybody and gossip. No sooner had Friedrich greeted the man than he launched into a frantic apology over the state of the mail he had delivered to Friedo the day before.

“I should have told you when delivered it yesterday. But I know how you like your privacy up here and I figured it was no business of mine as to the particulars of your post.”

“Any explanation would be appreciated, Herr Wittmer.” Dore stood, arms akimbo, leaning in towards the man. He was soft spoken even when excited.

“I noticed something was a bit off, but that damn woman had me so out of sorts on the hike out. Then, when I made it back to the caves, I got to thinking as to why the Baroness, or whatever she's calling herself, had me deliver it to you instead of bringing herself.”

“It's clear, is it not?” Friedrich looked back over his shoulder at the stack of mail.

“She wanted us to see that it had been opened and wanted us to see Herr Wittmer deliver it.”

“Yes, Dore. My wife thought as much as well. It appears snakes have been introduced to the island.”

“It is her game,” said Dore. “We observed it last night when her party stayed the night. An attempt to split our relationship and divide any sort of partnership already established.”

“She stayed the night under your roof? I would take inventory of your valuables, Frau.”

“The woman didn't just open the mail,” said Friedrich, red-faced. “The dirty bitch took some of the photos that were included. I saw them mentioned in writing but were nowhere to be found. She must have read them as well.”

“Perhaps she aims to do more than simply put us at odds.” Heinz moved to the veranda and motioned towards a deck chair. Dore nodded and he sat down.

“What do you know of this *Hacienda Paradiso*?” Dore said.

“Did she not tell you?” Heinz said. “The woman wouldn't shut up about it when we first met. It is her reason for coming. She plans to build a grand hotel here, a resort for wealthy American yachtsman. Hacienda Paradiso, the Paradise Hotel.”

“This cannot be allowed to happen.” Friedrich now stood alone in the center of the garden. He was shaking with anger, his fists clenched so tightly they had turned white.

Dore took a seat in the chair next to Herr Wittmer. She studied the flimsy fence surrounding Friedo—the once formidable thicket of brambles and volcanic cliffs surrounding their verdant grove. It had once felt so apart from the wilds around them. Barriers that kept them safe in their homestead. The danger to their peace, it seemed, were not the many varied wild animals who tested their defenses every night. It was other people, coming in broad daylight, with intentions admitted directly.

“If she builds some monstrous hotel on this island, that will be it for our way of life.”

“You met the silly woman, Dore, I doubt it will come to that.”

Friedrich and Dore shared a conspiratorial glance. They were not as optimistic about this eventuality as Heinz.

“Maybe.”

“When she called on us at the caves, before coming to visit with you, the very first thing she did was to wash her feet in our drinking water. Didn't ask us, didn't even introduce herself.”

“She sat in this very chair before receiving us upon our own veranda,” Dore said.

“So there's no doubt,” said Heinz. “The woman is calculating. But what is to be done? She has more men than either of us. That native man doesn't seem quite as bad as the others, but the other two ... gigolos. Philippson and Lorenz. I'm sure she's lovers to the both of them. Has them enthralled. When I ordered them out of our stream they just looked at me and laughed.”

“It chills me to think what they are up to right now, with no eyes on them,” Friedrich said.

“Herr Ritter, Frau Koe—Dore. Can I count on your support, as the senior homesteaders here on the island, if the Baroness or her men should raise hand against my own, or grasp for more than they are owed?”

Dore's heart went out to the man. He had a wife, a child, and another on the way. He thought of the future, of a pristine island where his family were free to spread out and become masters of Floreana in their own right. The Ritters had no such goals. They had

left civilization to find isolation and quiet contemplation. To escape the petty squabbles of politics and personality clashes. Herr Wittmer was asking too much from them.

Dore knew Friedrich's answer before he spoke. "I'm sorry, Herr Wittmer. We consider you a friend—and have grown to love your family in these few weeks we have shared our island. Yet we cannot allow ourselves to be pulled in to any personal conflict. This is what we left behind in Berlin."

Heinz Wittmer did not respond to their rejection. He sat for a moment longer after hearing Friedrich out, shook his head once—as if clearing out some sort of tangle—and rose from his chair.

"We'll see how you feel in a month's time, or two, when its your stream that is filled with strangers and your valley filling with their livestock." And then he left angry and disappointed. Dore supposed the man never quite got over their lack of support in this, right down to their last days on the island.

CHAPTER 11

“But it may also be that in a wild place like Floreana, the primitive character in each person comes out more strongly than elsewhere, so that everybody shows his own true face”

—Dore Strauch, *Satan Came to Eden*

November 15th, 1932. Floreana Island, Galápagos Archipelago

An unfortunate encounter with a pair of vacationers, which occurred at the close of 1933, set in motion a series of troubling events that ultimately lead to violent end of many of the inhabitants of Floreana.

It had been a month, and still Heinz Wittmer was steering clear of Friedo and the unhelpful Ritters. In fact they had received no guests other than the subdued Rudolf Lorenz, who would appear upon their property now and then for short conversation before rushing off to finish some chore or another given to him by his mistress. Friedrich paid the young man no mind, openly disgusted as he was by the fellow's pathetic devotion to the Baroness, but Dore appreciated his cordial visits.

She had grown worried for him, though, over the past few weeks due to his rapidly deteriorating physical appearance. When they had first met, Dore had noticed his fragile disposition, but she feared the harsh life of a Floreana homesteader—as well as

the demanding leadership of the Baroness—were exacerbating his condition. She mentioned it in passing to Friedrich once after he had left one evening.

“Tuberculosis I would suspect. Maybe exhaustion—malnutrition too.”

“The poor boy.”

“He's a man Dore. And it is none of our business. They've left us well enough alone this far, no use dragging ourselves into whatever perversions are going on down at the Hacienda.”

The Hacienda was being built less as a practical plantation, as the Ritters had endeavored, or a family home, as the Wittmers had constructed at the pirate caves, and instead rose over-sized and unfinished from the mud as the bare bones of a grand hotel. Lorenz had reported that the going was slow, for neither the Baroness nor any of her retinue had any skill in building. She and the strapping young Philippon, whom Dore had yet to meet, spent most of their time at the Mother House on Black Beach entertaining each other. This left Valdi in charge of construction and of Lorenz himself now that his mistress had cast him from her side. The man seemed lost now that he was no longer in her favor.

One afternoon following an energetic report from Lorenz concerning a couple of vacationers who had come ashore at Post Office Bay, Dore took notice of gunfire in the distance. *A hunting party.* There wasn't much else to do on Floreana other than hunt the wild cattle that roamed the hills near the pirate caves.

“I hope they get five of them,” Friedrich growled from the garden. He had been in a particularly sour mood since that morning, when they'd awoke to find a calf tangled up in their wrecked perimeter fence.

Dore didn't respond—she knew Friedrich's opinion on her soft spot for the suffering of animals. It was something he had shared with her in Berlin but quickly abandoned once on the island.

Later that evening, just as the sky was beginning to turn its signature deep red, a pair of strangers stumbled into Friedo. They turned out to be the two vacationers, a local Norwegian by the name of Estampa and a German man called Franke, who had chartered Estampa and his boat for his trip to Floreana. The pair were haggard, their clothes ripped in a dozen places each from the thorny bushes dotting the landscape of the island. Faces sun-burnt and clearly exhausted. They revealed their story in hoarse gulps between mouthfuls of otoy cakes—which Dore had begun to prepare with some regularity since they proved to be Lorenz's favorite.

Apparently, Franke had first come across the Baroness at the Hacienda Paradiso upon arrival. He had asked to stay at her hotel, a word he made sure to mention he used lightly, for the duration of his visit and even offered to pay. She had outright refused him, which seemed strange to Franke for a hotelier to do such a thing. Furthermore, Franke described her as outright hostile to him. Offended that he should even ask. Hers was a hotel for American millionaires she'd said.

Full dark arrived as the pair continued their outlandish story. Following the Baroness's refusal of service, Franke and Estampa decided to shoot a calf before returning to their fishing boat and leaving. They did so, but upon returning to their raft, which lay aground in Post Office Bay, they found the Baroness waiting for them upon the porch of the Mother House. They described her as unhinged—with a lit cigarette in a

holder dripping out the side of her mouth, wearing riding pants and boots, over-sized sunglasses, and holding a revolver in one hand and a bullwhip in the other.

“Surely you are exaggerating,” Friedrich said. “All of you are just as theatrical as she.”

“On my life,” Estampa said, “on my childrens' lives, I am not lying.”

“Did she fire at you,” asked Dore. “Are you injured.”

The Baroness hadn't fired, instead she'd cracked her whip and called out “Philippson, Valdi!” and her two companions had rushed the pair's raft and demolished it while she trained her pistol upon them. After the deed was done, she'd silently turned and walked back into the chalet with her *lovers*—as Franke described them—close behind.

Dore offered the men a place to stay for the night, to which Friedrich made no objection, even as reluctant as he was to the idea of taking any sort of side in the conflicts on the island. They slept soundly in the garden, stretched out on hammocks strung between scalesia trees, while Dore hugged her knees to her narrow chest and stared out through the mosquito netting into the shadowed treeline. With every sway of movement of a tree limb or animal call in the night she pictured the Baroness emerging with whip and pistol in hand.

The morning came without event, however. Friedrich took Franke and Estampa to the pirate caves to relay their story to Heinz Wittmer. Dore could only imagine the man's reaction, as prejudiced as he already was against the newcomers at the Hacienda. Herr Wittmer was in possession of a dinghy, which he kept harbored in a lagoon near the pirate caves. From there, Friedrich relayed to her after returning long hours later, they

were able to smuggle the vacationers back to their fishing boat and away from the violent reach of the Baroness.

The days following returned to normal almost too quickly. A crime, a violent crime, had been committed upon Floreana for the first time. Perhaps the first bit of violence against man to occur on its shores in hundreds of years, and all the inhabitants seemed to move on and pretend as if it hadn't happened. Dore found herself overcome with thoughts of the savage Baroness. Her imagination enlarged the woman to a figure almost mythical in scale, like the ghosts of the Dog King or the Devil Boar. At night, before falling to sleep, she wondered if Baroness was not sent to Floreana for this very purpose. Some sort of spirit conjured by the island itself as a warning against arrogant interlopers.

*

The New Year brought with it something singular to Floreana, its very first native born son. The Ritters heard the news as they often did, through an unexpected intrusion into Friedo. This time it was Heinz Wittmer, exhausted yet beaming with pride at the news he brought. He had come to beg Friedrich to accompany him back to the caves to examine the mother and newborn son. Surprisingly, he readily agreed and the two hurried off.

Dore was stunned by the rare pleasure she saw light up Dr. Ritter's face upon hearing the news. It touched her at first, but then that emotion died before she even had time to process it. It was a thing Dore could never give to the man, should he want it. Which, of course, he had consistently said he had no interest in. "Procreation is the extreme of ego," or something like that. Dore would have loved desperately a child of

her own on Floreana, could she have made one with Friedrich. The Multiple Sclerosis had taken that choice from her. She was left alone on the homestead to fight the rolling pulses of envy that threatened to overtake her. Not the envy of the lovely Margret Wittmer, whose joy Dore shared, but a sort sorrow of all women childless and lonely.

Lorenz, to Dore's relief, came calling at Friedo before she could collapse too far in on herself in the wake of the happy news. He had come to share with them that very same announcement, but on noticing the absence of Friedrich and the state of Dore, took a seat beside her and kept her company. Dore recognized his attention, and loved him a little for his unspoken kindness. Friedrich would have just growled about the fragility of womanly emotion.

The young man steered clear of any topic concerning children, and instead gossiped about the happening back at the Hacienda.

“A bull, not a calf or a cow, a full grown bull has fallen from the cliffs above Madame's garden.” Though Lorenz had used her honorific, he relayed this information with a barely suppressed giggle of schadenfreude.

“Goodness, what a mess. I suppose she made you deal with it.”

“Actually, no. She is determined to make profit of it somehow. I've just come from the caves where I offered the corpse at a discount to Herr Wittmer. I'm supposed to extend the same offer to you.”

“We're vegetarians, Rudolf.”

“Yes well, I can say I have offered. All's the better, it's been there a week. Frau Wittmer asked if that was the smell she'd notice coming from our direction.”

“Well in that case, how much are you charging for the beast?” The two shared a laugh together on the veranda, each cradling one of Dore's cats on their lap.

“Nice up here.” Lorenz had grown serious. “I forget what it's like other places.”

“What do you mean?”

“You don't know what it's like for me at that place. If I had an ounce of self respect I wouldn't put up with what she expects of me.” Lorenz then launched into an account of all the misdeeds and injustices being done to both him and the Wittmers by the hands of the Baroness and her new lover, Philippson.

They had been business partners in Paris, she and Lorenz, with Philippson hired as their employee at the store. They had been together, using Lorenz money primarily to fund their lifestyle and eventually their journey to the Galápagos. The three's relationship quickly complicated to the point he was forced to share the Baroness with Philippson in every sense of the word. She had now even begun referring to her one-time-employee as her “fiancee” or sometimes her “husband”. Now Lorenz was treated like a hired man, like the Ecuadorian Valdi, except even he was treated with more respect.

“She knows I've begun to take exception to how I am being treated, so she's gotten Valdi to watch over me when I do the work around the Hacienda. He's terrified of her—never lets me out of his sight. Always bossing me around. It's all I can do not to strangle the man. She'd probably never let me back up here again if she knew I was saying this.”

Dore was no stranger to feeling trapped or under-appreciated, yet she found herself unable to understand how a man could be so weak as to let another dominate their

will upon him so completely. She felt she had never seen a person so utterly humiliated. So impossibly self-aware of their own pathetic station.

“What of the other man, Philippson?” Dore said. Surely the man, once under his employ, and owing of his current situation to Lorenz's funding must have some sympathy for the poor fellow.

The man, he said, had replaced him in the Baroness's bed, but still she could not let Lorenz go. Philippson was treated like a favored pet, better even than Dore treated Burro, and was hardly ever put to any real work. The most he had done was some play-acting at designing parts of the Hacienda when he felt the urge. Often he started something, and upon receiving praise from the Baroness, immediately quit what he was doing and left it for Lorenz. It had now become a favored past time of hers to hold her lover up to Lorenz as an example of a real man—reveling in his shame.

“I've got to leave this place. I don't care where, just away from here.”

Dore remained wordless. The man needed to say these things, and who else was there for him? Friedrich barely had the interest to hear Dore's problems, let alone Lorenz's. Heinz Wittmer was quite obviously disgusted with the weakness of the young man, she'd be surprised if he'd find an ounce of sympathy there.

“But what else is there for me? I've no money left. No skill to speak of. I can't even get off this damn island.”

As he spoke, Dore once again saw him as she had the first time they met: a young boy. The tone of his voice, the sympathy and protectiveness she felt for Lorenz, it was hard to believe he was nearly the same age as she. Though, looking at the dark circles

under his eyes, the lines stretching across his pained face, he looked more like a broken down old man.

“He beats me. He didn't before, but he does now. I thought at least in this Madame would have stopped him. She encouraged him, Frau Dore.”

Lorenz pulled his knees up under his chin and began to cry softly to himself. Rocking. Dore patted him on the back and then moved to other side of the house to give the young man some privacy. As much as she felt for him, she hoped Friedrich would not come to find him sobbing on the veranda. She knew well, the man had no patience for tears or weakness. If Lorenz was to enlist any sort of help from Dr. Ritter, he could not see this.

“You need to watch out for her.” Lorenz had stilled and was now staring down the path towards the Hacienda. “She considers your man competition. She didn't like it when I named him Pope of the Galápagos. Such a small thing, and it may be my undoing. She is now writing her own articles to compete with Herr Ritter's—signing them *Empress Pirate Queen of the Galápagos*.”

It was an absurd title of course, no more believable than “bBroness”. But as he spoke the words Dore felt a prickling work its way slowly up her spine to settle at the nape of her neck. It wasn't the words that chilled her, it was the unhinged arrogance. The delusion. A woman that totes a pistol and whip and names herself as such is a woman who is unpredictable. Life on Floreana was fragile—the symbiosis between man and wild there hung by a thread at the best of times. The last thing they needed was more unpredictability.

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This was, unfortunately, precisely what they got.

The Baroness, even with her Hacienda still woefully unfinished and sinking into the mud of a poorly chosen plot, had been working tirelessly, along with Philippon, in creating interest in her hotel. Any traveler or trader who thought to drop anchor nearby routinely would report straight to Friedo, to meet the famous Friedrich Ritter. Most knew him from the same sorts of articles Heinz Wittmer and the Baroness did. They brought with them gifts, news, and even more fame. This, as Dore had witnessed the morning after they had met, was taken as a personal affront by the Baroness.

In the months following Lorenz's emotional confession, visitors to Floreana now brought with them the expectation of sex, danger, and adventure. Multiple magazines had run her lies with her new title, proclaiming her “lust-mad” and in possession of a harem of “male love slaves”. The latter, to at least some extent, seemed to be true.

Now when outsiders called upon Friedo, it was becoming more routine for them to ask from them stories of the Baroness.

“Did she really cast poor Pablo Rolando and his bride, Rosa, who were shipwrecked on their honeymoon, adrift in a small boat to perish in a storm at sea?”

Friedrich would respond in anger, calling the visitors fools and drawing short their visits more often than not. With every new curious spectator that came ashore without gifts or trade for Friedrich, he became more and more resolute that the woman would be the end of them. When she broached the subject, he wouldn't discuss it, but Dore knew it to be because of their unspoken reliance on the outside world to keep themselves fed. The dry season had finally started in a way they had not seen in their

years on the island, and without the canned goods from America or the odd chicken here and there Friedrich and Dore would have starved months ago.

Friedrich redoubled his efforts—writing any spare hour he had in the day, sending off for publication any place that would have him. He was often rejected, however. His philosophical musings and scientific reports were no match for tales of a topless pirate queen beating her chest like an ape and screaming “I am the Queen of the Galápagos!” She even starred in a short film where she played this ridiculous version of herself. Dr. Ritter simply could not match her savvy in self-promotion. Their squabble over the interest of the rare ship that dropped anchor at the bay soon became a matter of life and death for both parties.

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The final straw came when one of Friedrich's long-time friends and benefactors, Captain Hancock, paid a call to Friedo to leave gifts of groceries, shoes, and an assortment of valuable tools for the garden. The Baroness soon caught wind of this, Dore suspected the pathetic Lorenz of informing despite all his enmity with the woman (perhaps because of it to return to her good graces). However she found out, she dispatched the imposing Philippson the following Sunday with orders to compel the Ritters to divide Hancock's gifts between themselves and the Hacienda.

When Friedrich refused, Philippson accused him of warning visitors away from the Hacienda, and speaking ill of them in advance so as to monopolize their attention. Dr. Ritter flatly denied the allegations, though Dore knew them to be true. Nothing he had said, however, had been a lie.

“The next time it happens,” Philippson said to this. “Herr Doctor—if you are even a doctor—the next time it happens I’ll be back here before they have left port. And you’ll catch a beating old man, and your wretched woman can limp over and watch if she wants to.”

Friedrich's response in turn was to grab him by collar and belt and throw him headlong out the front door. He followed the young man in such a rage that Philippson never even attempted to defend himself and instead retreated down the donkey path back towards the Hacienda.

This was hardly the end of tensions on Floreana, and Dore wondered if it hadn't actually heightened the conflict that was to follow. If relations had been strained between the homesteads before this incident, they were at a boiling point by the beginning of the next year.

CHAPTER 12

“When there is no more hope, we'll smoke our last cigarette and take our last drink. Then, we'll go down to the beach, hand in hand, and walk into the ocean.”

—Baroness Eloise Wehrbornde Wagner-Bousquet

February 1934. Floreana Island, Galápagos Archipelago

Drought gripped the isle of Floreana fully in its hoarse clutches by the end of February of 1934. The final year Dore would have to call the island her home.

It was a heat like none of the settlers on the island had known. All things that grew on the island were scorched and blasted and the ground itself radiated a visible heat making traveling any distances a risky venture, even with appropriate footwear. The sun seemed to pulse in a colorless sky—the ocean surrounding Floreana laying still as if in a never-ending doldrums. Dore thought of her turtle dream from her last night in Berlin. Of the tortoises leaving the island where she could not follow.

Friedo's vital, life-giving spring had ceased to flow. The garden was gray and withered.

From Black Beach a hot wind blew, leaving violence in its wake like a tide of invisible fire. Banana trees fell beneath it, animals fled to the dark places the human inhabitants had never been. It did not stop for several days, and when it did, was followed

by a heat even more unbearable than before. Friedrich had measured as high as 120 degrees in the shade of the now rapidly-dying scalesia forest.

Nights, for the first time ever on Floreana, grew silent. The island was littered with the carcasses of animals expired from lack of water and heat exhaustion. Every cooling breeze was ruined in its effect by the smell of death and decay.

In this trying time, Heinz Wittmer had taken to visiting Friedo once a week to share information. His family was having a hard go of it, almost as bad as the Ritters. The Hacienda, however, he reported to be near its end. The Baroness's animals died on their feet, starving. The garden had become a dry wasteland of cracked leaves and stalks. Even for the small household of three, for Valdi had abandoned their camp months before, they could not grow enough produce to feed themselves. Heinz had no clue as to how they yet persisted.

Dore imagined the Baroness to have a similar stock of canned goods as they had at Friedo. The Ritters' garden long since gone, their chickens not laying, they had begun feeding themselves primarily by dipping into their store-bought inventory.

“It won't be long before they call on us for support. You should expect a visit from that gigolo of hers.”

Soon after Heinz had warned them of the possibility of an emissary of the Baroness, one was sent to Friedo. Dore was surprised to find it was Lorenz who came and not Philippon, however. She had heard reports from Herr Wittmer that the fellow had taken to spending the majority of his time away from the Hacienda, on the Wittmer property. When the Baroness could not find him there, Dore had sometimes heard her in the valley outside of their own property fence calling for him.

“Lori. Looooooooorrrri. Come home and I'll kiss it better.”

They were taunts as much as they were honest attempts to find him. Friedrich had told her to ignore the woman and go back to sleep. She was seeking confrontation—probably looking for some reason to file a grievance with them to the Governor. She had already posted two about the Ritters and a full three against the Wittmers. On top of all her other abhorrent qualities, the Baroness had proved litigious as well.

The Lorenz that visited them on this occasion (for one never knew if the pitiful, sobbing Lorenz would arrive, or the troubled but pleasant Lorenz) was one they had never seen before. He was not cautious or frightened, despite the state of the island all around them. He seemed to Dore to possess some strange strength—a reserve of will-power found hidden at the bottom of his well, stronger than the exhaustion that gripped them all. Proof of the final worth of his character after all. Even Friedrich managed to greet the man for once.

He had, however, grown exceedingly thin. Whether his illness had progressed yet again, or if it was a symptom of the drought, perhaps both, he seemed to be a man at the end of something. Perhaps his new-found strength stemmed from whatever permanence he now glimpsed waiting before him.

Lorenz did not ask for favors or support. In fact, no matter the reason he had come, the man seem completely severed from the Baroness now mind and body. Dore sat with him in the garden, among the dying otoy plants while Friedrich worried at the cracked earth around them.

“Do you remember the cakes you made for me from these?” Lorenz motioned to the wide, dried leaves wilting at his side.

“Friedrich read that they were one of the favorites of the giant tortoises who used to live on this island.”

“Now they're both gone.” Lorenz was looking down at his bare feet.

He then relayed to Dore the goings on down at the Hacienda. Terrible, physical confrontations much worse than any that had come before. Mostly between Philippon and himself, though the Baroness had begun using her whip on both the men as the drought drew ever more dire. His only remaining hope was to get off the island. He had wanted to leave for months, but there was a desperation in his eyes now that leaned towards the fanatic.

“I knew it was a bad idea,” Lorenz said. “But I didn't know what else to do. I went to the Mother House, she hasn't stepped foot in that mud pit she calls a hotel in over half a year, I went there and demanded enough money to charter a boat back to the mainland. At first she'd threatened and refused, but I pushed until she had to make the choice to kill me in cold blood or give me what was asked.

“She actually broke in tears then. I've seen her cry, many times, but I never believed them to be genuine. This time they were genuine. Her face turned red, and scrunched up all ugly. She told me her money had completely run out. Our money, for I seeded the whole venture. Gone.”

He went on to describe the scene that followed. On being denied his chance to escape, Lorenz had snapped internally there in the chalet on the bay. He took up one of her fancy chairs she claimed to have imported from some Parisian craftsman, and swung it round his head before smashing it through one of the cupboard doors.

The Baroness's reaction to this was to laugh. Cheeks still wet from sobbing, she had looked in the eye at him and mocked him with laughter directly to his face. Then something struck him a sickening blow to the back of the head, and Lorenz woke up disoriented some time later on the path outside the Hacienda.

Fresh welts on his skin revealed he had been flogged by his former mistress's bullwhip while unconscious. His body felt as if it was one continuous open wound, yet he forced himself—shoeless on the scorched, jagged lava fields of the island—to flee from the reach of the Baroness. Night overtook him, and then another. He must have fallen into another fit of unconsciousness, for two days passed before he found his way at last to Friedo.

Dore listened to all this intently. Once he had finished, she turned to find Friedrich—normally disinterested in the affairs of others—had ceased his shoveling and stood just over Lorenz's shoulder. He looked over her head and back into the house. She followed his gaze: it was where he kept their firearms.

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After Lorenz had said his piece at Friedo and recovered a spell, he made the trek back down the mountain to stay with the Wittmers. Dore saw no more of him for the next month. Though the drought had not abated, life it seemed had returned to some sense of normalcy on the island. Perhaps all that was needed was a clearer separation of the different homesteads and perhaps a safe haven for Lorenz.

Then, at noon on the nineteenth of March, Friedrich and Dore lay down for a midday nap following their morning chores. In the Galápagos Islands, midday is the hour of silence during the day. In the dry, death choked days of the drought on Floreana, the

stillness hung like a physical weight over all things—dragging upon one's very humanity as if its burden was increased with every expired animal on the island that died in the place of a human inhabitant.

All at once, a guttural, drawn-out shriek split through the unmoving silence—hardly human in its pure animal panic. Yet it was a woman's voice. Dore bolted upright in bed, the mosquito netting of the cage around her catching around her head in her haste. Friedrich had reacted in the same manner. They both sat motionless there, arms behind them supporting their upper bodies and waiting. The fact that they had each heard it counted out some sort of dream—yet how could they be sure? It had just been the one shriek. And it had sounded neither near nor far, yet that was no new phenomenon on Floreana. The sound had but an instant, the silence folding back over it as if it were a physical thing pulling the sound back under into its depths.

Dore followed Friedrich to the gate at the edge of their property. If someone had been hurt out in the bush, Friedo would be the first place they would seek help. Friedrich was the only doctor for many miles. The pair waited at their fence for the better part of an hour but no one came.

Balanced on one of the fence posts, a wild cat regarded them absently. It would be dead before the day was done. So would another one of their chickens and about half the remaining wild cattle.

The pair returned to the the house. Friedrich's healthy, brown complexion had gone white as smoke from a fire built with wet timber. Each hesitated to speak about what they had heard.

“The drought has worried our nerves, I fear,” Dore finally said.

“Doubtful.” At Dore's reaction he added, “More likely there is something in the atmosphere—I've read it happens in seasons as dry as this—where the surrounding sound can exaggerate or distort in the air.”

Dore could tell by the look on his face that even Friedrich did not believe what he had said.

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The following morning, Dore and Friedrich were paid an unusual visit. Frau Wittmer came calling with Lorenz in tow rather than her husband. It was unusual for, since their first evening on Floreana, Margret Wittmer had never returned to Friedo even for a short visit.

Upon arrival, Frau Wittmer immediately unburdened herself of a large collection of gifts she had brought for the Ritters. “Belated birthday presents” she called them with a nervous laugh. Among their number was a cake and a dozen delicately embroidered handkerchiefs. She claimed they had been sent unexpectedly by her sister, but she wanted Dore to have them as a token of their continued friendship through all the dramatic unfoldings that had occurred on the island.

The two women engaged in a short exchange of forced pleasantries—for they were not and had never been particularly close. Friedrich, of course, abstained as usual. Then, with no pretense of a transition, Margret and Lorenz launched into what sounded to Dore's ear to be a rehearsed story between the two of them.

A few days ago, Margret began, the Wittmers had noticed an unusual amount of activity taking place in the direction of the Hacienda. It appeared that a sizable number of guests had come to the Hacienda to see the Baroness.

At this, Dore glanced over to where Friedrich had been feigning disinterest. He was of course famously anchoritic, yet the disquieting sound they'd heard the day before must have still weighed as heavily on his mind as it did hers. His face held the same skepticism she felt inside. From their vantage point, high on the side of the volcanic crater in elevated portion of Floreana, the couple had a near-unobstructed view of all the pathways of approach to the island. Since 1929, when they'd first arrived, Dore could count on one hand the times they had missed the arrival of a ship. Even then, without fail, the fault had rested on weather. There had been clear visibility every day for the past month.

They said nothing and Frau Wittmer continued. The morning after the arrival of the Baroness's guests the wretched woman had come calling for Lorenz at the Wittmer's newly constructed house, knowing that he often spent the night with them when he had fled the Hacienda. She did not enter the garden, but stood out at the gate and called up. She had come to report good news, Frau Wittmer said.

“The strangest thing has happened, *darling*.” Margret paraphrased the woman's words. Dore knew the Baroness only used “darling” when talking to men, but again she said nothing.

“A party of old friends of mine, they've never been here of course, they're taking a tour of the world in their private yacht. They've come round after hearing of all our adventures, to ask Philippson and me (as in the Baroness) to join them in the South Sea.”

Lorenz picked up where she left off. It was surreal, possessing a certain Baroness-like American vaudevillian performance quality. Later in the day, apparently, Lorenz walked down to the Baroness's place and found it to be abandoned. He next tried the

Norwegian chalet in Post Office Bay, where she often stayed, and found it deserted as well.

“Strange,” observed Ritter, “that we would not see this world-touring vessel either arrive or depart. Or not to be visited by them as outsiders are so often possessed to do.”

“Oh yes, but there are so many strange things on this island, are there not?”

Dore's heart seemed to beat at once too fast and too slow. *They were lying*—both of them and directly to her face. She didn't know why yet, but she was beginning to imagine and it spelled nothing good for Friedo. Had anything they said been the truth? *Why deceive us, unless they have plans for Friedrich and me as well?*

Lorenz then launched into a savage tirade concerning the vanished Baroness. He declared she had ruined him body and soul, naming her both devil and whore and wishing awful things on Philippson and her.

“Good riddance of foul rubbish,” he said, face distorted in a narrow mask of trembling fury. “I hope they both are shipwrecked and eaten by sharks.”

His passion then abruptly ebbed as quickly as it had exploded out of him. In a cool voice he asked if Friedrich and Dore might be interested in buying some of the Baroness's things that she (he just mentioned this fact now) had left for him to sell so he could leave the island as he intended. Dore's eyes widened—what she was becoming more and more sure was happening couldn't be happening. Couldn't have happened. Nothing she had ever seen in the Baroness, nor heard about the Baroness, lead her to believe the woman would leave her belongings behind to benefit Lorenz. That she would leave quietly one day with no announcement and no theatrics. That she would let the Ritters win.

“I’m glad you’ve found a way to leave this place you hate so much.” Dore spoke carefully. “Of course we’d be happy to look at what you have and see if we can help.”

This affirmation seemed like a sign for the two to end their visit. No sooner had Dore answered than Frau Wittmer and Lorenz rose (again as if rehearsed) and said their hasty good byes. Margret Wittmer promised to send a donkey on the following Sunday, the 1st of April, to travel to the Hacienda. Dore and Friedrich escorted them to the gate and saw them back down the donkey path towards the caves.

The couple remained at the perimeter fence for a long while after their company had disappeared from sight. Eventually, Dore turned first to retire to the house and Friedrich soon followed after her. All the way up the long garden path to the house Friedrich was silent.

“What is on your mind?” Dore said.

“You played your part extremely well, Dore. I didn’t think you had it in you.”

“My part?”

“My dear child,” he said. “Is it possible you believed all that? The whole story was nothing but lies from beginning to end. I haven’t yet worked out the exact purpose of it all, but one thing is very clear...”

Dore stopped walking mi-step. Her limp caused her to lurch awkwardly, almost depositing her on the garden path. A cold drip of horror rolled down the small of her back as she considered Dr. Ritter’s insinuation. It was too terrible to think, and yet, she felt she had been thinking it the moment Margret Wittmer had opened her mouth.

“Tell me what you mean. Has the Baroness really gone?”

Friedrich stopped and turned. He took a step towards Dore and clutched her hand in both of his.

“Yes, she has gone all right. I dare say no one will see her again.”

“You think her lost at sea?”

“I think nothing at the moment. We shall know when we see the Hacienda for ourselves on Sunday. The sea often brings back what is lost there—no, we should look for the signs of a fire.”

Dore remembered the bonfires they'd made using the acacia wood that was so plentiful throughout Floreana. It had burned long and it had burned hot. They'd used it in the early days to get rid of the carcasses of animals they'd shot at the fence line when they'd become a nuisance. When the fires had burned out, they'd found that even the cattle bones had been obliterated to nothing.

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Dore passed through the gate to the Hacienda Paradiso along with Friedrich, Margret and Heinz Wittmer, and Lorenz. She leaned on Friedrich's arm, more out of a deterrent to her intense compulsion to turn around and leave than for any physical need of support. She felt as if they were intruders into some un-buried graveyard. As if the ghosts of Philippon and the Baroness walked beside them—growing more corporeal with every step towards the abandoned structure.

As they set foot upon the muddy grounds from which the Hacienda rose, a sudden scorching wind swept up at their backs. The parched leaves of the banana trees scraped against one another like whispers from unseen mouths above. There was not so much a feeling of being watched as of being commented upon.

It was the house Dore dreaded the most to enter. She had visited there once, in the early days, when the Baroness had just been an eccentric nuisance. Even then she had felt uneasy between its walls.

Lorenz led the way inside, followed by the Wittmers. They entered with a casual disinterest that seemed impossible to Dore in the present situation. There was something eerily disrespectful, even arrogant about their movements in this place. Dore hung back at the doorway for a moment, inspecting every corner of the entry way before finally following the rest of the group into the Hacienda.

The very first thing she noticed was the Baroness's beret resting upon the table. She could not have said why, but its abandonment there in plain sight nearly forced a moan from her throat. Further inspection found a row of what seemed to be all her shoes against the wall as well as a large amount of luggage. The trunks and suitcases were stacked exactly in the same manner that Dore had last seen them—as if they hadn't been touched at all in the years since.

Margret and Lorenz had given the Ritters the impression that Philippson and the Baroness had left the Hacienda in a crowded state of activity. The hotel, however, was in a completely orderly state. Dust lay thick on every surface, as if they had not been touched for long since before Frau Wittmer reported to have observed the crowded gathering.

Friedrich stood at a window looking out onto the expanse of desolate garden stretching the property. He looked over to Dore and shook his head. No sign of the remnants of a fire then. Dore didn't know whether she was disappointed or relieved.

Lorenz had mentioned that on his last visit both the Baroness and Philipppson had cleared the Hacienda of all their personal belongings. Yet family photographs, even one of Philipppson's mother were still on display—also covered in a layer of dust. But all this still could have been explained away without much effort save for the final item that drew Dore's attention.

When she saw it, she moved across the room to get a better look. Dore had been holding out hope that she was being excitable, that Friedrich was jumping to conclusions because, as always, he believed the worst in people. Yet there it was: *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. The Baroness had often spoken of the book as the on small possession she owned that she could never live without. Almost like it was possessed of the magical qualities described within. A personal talisman. She had had the copy for years, and it went with her everywhere—even on the most insignificant of trips.

And there it was, abandoned in the skeletal remains of the grand hotel that never was. Standing there, the book in front of her and the discarded beret behind her, Dore knew that the Hacienda would never be completed. It, like its builders, would return to the mud as if it had never been here at all.

CHAPTER 13

“All thoughts of sympathy or antipathy do good or evil and when they are unable to find a fertile soil in which [to] take root, back they go to their originator and spend on him the potentialities for good or evil inherent in them.”

– Friedrich Ritter

“And once you are awake, you shall remain awake eternally. ”

—Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

July, 1934. Floreana Island, Galápagos Archipelago

Lorenz took lunch in Friedo on his last day on Floreana. They sat out on the veranda, as it was a nice day, eating old bananas and otoy cakes with a glass of eggnog as was their noonday ritual. Lorenz had brought with him as a guest a fishing boat captain by the name of Nuggerud, who was set to finally facilitate the ailing man's escape from the island. The captain was a local Norwegian, big and stocky, with an honest face. He perched on the edge of a lawn chair sipping his drink like a sun-darkened, overgrown boy.

Dore settled back into her own seat and observed Lorenz as he ate. Did she still really believe of him what she had been so sure about months before? Friedrich and she had been over their observations of their trip to the Hacienda multiple times and always came to the same conclusion: Lorenz must have killed his comrades and then been assisted in a cover up by Heinz Wittmer. It was no secret that the man had a distaste for

them. But nor did he have any love for Lorenz. Dore had a hard time imagining Herr Wittmer lifting a finger to help the man.

She also had a hard time reconciling the calm, collected skeleton of a man she saw in front of her now with the meek lapdog who had waited on the Baroness hand and foot years before. As his confidence grew it seemed his health had withdrawn. He looked as if the slight breeze funneling through the gap in the crater surrounding the valley might blow him over at any moment.

Lorenz spoke excitedly about his upcoming voyage as they ate—the rest of the group letting him ramble as long as he liked. After a moment Dore noticed he had grown quiet with no warning. His face held a glimmer of the old familiar gloom it had once warn so regularly. She took a last bite of her banana. What had he remembered just now that so ripped him from the present and plummeted him back through the long, dry days?

Nuggerud, a loud and confident sort of man, filled the awkward silence by launching into a recounting of an odd scene he had observed on what he unknowingly identified as the night the Baroness was believed to have disappeared.

“It must have been very late,” he said, “when I spied a huge bonfire down by shoreline at Post Office Bay. Only a few short meters from the porch of that cabin down by the water's edge.”

Friedrich caught Dore's eye at the mention of the bonfire. All at once she recalled their conversation concerning the Baroness's departure on the night they had learned of her leaving. *Look for the signs of a fire.* And so they had on their visit to the Hacienda, but on finding no evidence of one had put the subject out of mind.

It was very late, Nuggerud continued, and from the ship's deck he could make out two figures performing some strange dance in the light of the flames. One was larger, perhaps even taller than average, the other slighter—short like a woman.

“Almost as small as you, Rudolf.” Nuggerud laughed a great belly laugh and cuffed Lorenz on a narrow shoulder. The small man nearly fell from his chair.

“Sounds like the Baroness to me,” said Lorenz. “An the other would be Philippon. They liked to do that sort of thing.”

“Might be, you'd know better than I. I 've heard about this Baroness, I thought they may have been involved in some sort of orgy. There were two other ships at port, yachts I believe, who may have seen the same thing. I thought perhaps the whole thing was staged for our benefit. A sort of advertiseme—“

“Sounds like an idea of of Philippon's,” interrupted Lorenz. Dore's distrust of the man was steadily creeping back. He seemed to be too quick to answer questions unasked by the Norwegian captain. Why was it so imperative to the man that the bonfire have been attended by the Baroness and Philippon unless he had something to hide?

“As I was saying, someone less knowledgeable than I might have thought such a thing. But it was obvious they were extremely drunk—whoever it was had no idea they were being watched. And I was close enough to hear them yelling, singing I thought at first, but now I think they may have been arguing.”

Nuggerud continued the story, Lorenz vehemently claiming that his former comrades were famous for singing when they drank. Dore wasn't convinced by his explanations, though. For all her flaws, drinking was not one of the Baroness's vices. If it had been, Heinz Wittmer would have surely reported on such a habit to the Ritters during

one of his visits to Friedo. He seemed to delight in gossiping about every other lurid detail of her life at the Hacienda Paradiso. Something either had gone very wrong to drive a teetotaler like the Baroness to drink to such a degree, or she was not one of the shadowy figures seen arguing and moving erratically around a massive bonfire the night she went missing.

Before long, Nuggerud had finished his retelling of events, and the conversation slipped in to yet another lull. Lorenz seemed ill-at-ease with the direction the luncheon had taken, so Dore addressed him directly in an attempt to steer the conversation away from ominous territory.

“You must be itching to set sail.” It was the best she could come up with.

“Are you so eager to see me go?” Lorenz said it with a smile but the expression seemed to be a mask over something else.

“Quite the opposite, I shall miss our evening chats.”

“It's all I have wanted, all I've worked towards for years. But now that the day is come I'm afraid. I don't know why.”

His foreboding words hung in the midday air. The drought had still yet to end, the Hacienda lay in decay as a constant reminder of the violence that had befallen the island, and Friedrich and Dore now lived in fear of a late night visit from Heinz Wittmer with an intent to investigate what they had figured out about the Baroness's sudden departure.

After Lorenz and Nuggerud had set sail and left for good, Friedrich and Dore had their first serious conversation as to whether they still had the will to remain on Floreana. Dore had thrown out hints for months of her wish to abandon their lifestyle experiment and return to civilization now that violence and betrayal had followed them to paradise.

Friedrich had exploded in a rage to dwarf any of his previous ones. He named her betrayer, Judas, weak, and simple hausfrau. He'd shaken her by the shoulders and listed all the ways she would be humiliating him if they left in defeat. If even she left in defeat without him.

Dore saw in his eyes then that he wanted to leave to. Possibly even more than she. But he could not now—not after all he had written, after all he had given up to come to Floreana. He would keep them there until the end, she realized. For nonexistent honor or some false sense of male ego. Those bright, intriguing eyes she first saw from her hospital bed as a young woman were now crazed and unfocused. A sort of Kurtzian horror burned inside of them now, the island all he had left after Dore's perceived betrayal.

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Four months later, on November 1st 1934, Friedrich awoke early in the morning feeling ill. When Dore spoke about his ailment later, she would describe it as a stroke that left him paralyzed on his right side. She attended him for the day, administering him strong coffee and charcoal mixes in an attempt to purge his system of a poison which had caused his sudden sickness.

It was the chickens she blamed for Ritter's stroke. The drought had left their food stores severely depleted so she had made a meal out of their egg laying hens the night before. Her mistake, she admitted to Margret Wittmer later, was in the feed she had given them: comprised primarily of old dried pork cut from their long time enemy the Devil Boar, whom they finally managed to slay once he had been already laid low by heat

exhaustion. The morning Friedrich awoke to his illness, Dore also stepped outside on the veranda to find all the chickens in the coupe had fallen dead.

As his fever lasted into the night, Dore read to him his favorite passages from Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

“Mark these lines, Dore, and remember them always ... in memory of me.”

She recited, underlined, and annotated sentences at his request as she mopped an icy sweat that had broken out across Friedrich's brow.

“Man is something that shall be overcome. Man is a rope, tied between beast and overman – a rope over an abyss. What is great in man is that he is a bridge and not an end.”

Friedrich awoke from a sort of coma during the night for Dore to discover he had lost the ability to speak. Fearing she had exhausted her abilities to take care of the man, she made the treacherous trip to the Wittmer's homestead in the dead of night. It was an hour long journey that must have taken nearly three times that in the low visibility. Later, Dore would describe the panicked flight as one of pure terror that she would return to find Friedrich had expired while she limped her way to get help. His imagined shouts of pain following her the entire trip, accusing her of leaving him alone in his final hours.

Heinz Wittmer arrived at Friedo to find that Dr. Ritter still could not speak, and had also lost his ability to see. He was, however, still fully conscious and capable of hearing and understanding the goings on around him. Against Dore's objection, he handed the sick man paper and a pencil so that he might attempt to communicate in some fashion.

He waited at Friedrich's bedside opposite Dore. She followed his gaze to the dwindling storehouse filled with flour, butter, fat, oil, sugar, canned vegetables and meats. Piles of empty cans and glass containers were strewn about the kitchen area as well—shameful proof to the sort of existence the two had lead.

“I always knew you never lived off only fruits and eggs like he said.”

Dore said nothing, not wanting to lie or speak ill of a man fighting for his life in front of her.

“I guess we see now why Doctor Ritter didn't want anyone else on this island of his. So no one would threaten his supplies. Vegetarian. Laid low by eating meat.”

The last he said in response to the empty shells lying all across the floor of the house. Especially towards the end, Friedrich had been hunting more and more to feed the two of them. She winced at the American made shoes near his bed—he had even been forced to relent in his ideals concerning modern footwear after seeing the strain the island put on his home-made ones. It seemed that in putting to practice all of his morals, Friedrich had been forced to abandon each of them one by one. That perhaps, as much as any bad chicken, might have been his downfall.

Friedrich must have been in enormous pain, for at one point he wrote on his pad of paper the location of a firearm and instructed them to shoot him in the head. Heinz Wittmer's accounts of the final moments of Dr. Ritter's life vary somewhat from Dore's. He never, when recounting the ordeal after the fact, mentioned any sort of paralysis—which stands to reason given that Friedrich was reported to have written with a pencil. He also maintained that Dore had denied eating the spoiled meat, when later she told a version of events where she stopped herself at the last moment.

Throughout the night Friedrich became increasingly erratic in his moment and responses, especially to Dore. She would duck under the mosquito netting and into the cage to find Ritter's reaction to immediately be one of aggression and fear. He'd kick and pound at the bed in an attempt to ward off his long-time companion. Dore saw these as the death throes of a man in unimaginable pain. Heinz, however, suspected Dore of poisoning the man, but never could prove the fact.

Their stories diverge most severely on the subject of Friedrich's final words spoken on Floreana. Wittmer recorded that the final statement written by Dr. Friedrich Ritter had been scrawled for the benefit of Dore and read "In my last moment, I curse you!" He then folded his hands in a pleading gesture directed towards both Wittmer and his wife, who had joined Dore and he to help attend Friedrich. Both Margret and Heinz spoke of the gesture as indicative of a man begging to end his life and to keep him away from Dore Strauch.

Their description of his final moments were of Dore returning to his side to relieve the Wittmers in their vigil. Upon noticing her presence, Friedrich began to become frantically animated. He pounded and kicked and suddenly raised up as though he planned to hurl himself at Dore, but instead let out a scream and dropped back onto the bed. Shortly afterwards, Dore turned him over to find that he had died.

Dore's version of events differs in her accounting of his final words and moments. She writes in *Satan Came to Eden: A Survivor's Account of the "Galápagos Affair"*:

Frederick sat up. He stretched out both his arms toward me. He stretched out both his arms towards me. All trace of pain and torment had vanished from his face, which was transfigured with a look so lucid, so

triumphant, so calm, so tender, so illuminated with the knowledge that surpasses understanding, that I could only gaze and gaze upon him like one who sees a miracle.

His glance was joyously tranquil, and he seemed actually to say to me: 'I go; but promise you will not forget what we have lived for.' I called his name in astonishment. It seemed to me as if he would draw me with him. Then he sank back, and I began to caress his forehead tenderly. He became quite still, and that was death. (282)

Dore left Floreana a year later and returned to Berlin where she published a memoir of her time on the island. She and Friedrich had lived as modern Crusoes there 5 years, only one more than the Wittmers had originally intended. The Wittmers, however, still live on Floreana today.

Dore made good Friedrich's last request of her by endeavoring to spread his writings and knowledge until she finally passed due to complication involving her Multiple Sclerosis in 1943.

CHAPTER 14

“Behind every exquisite thing that existed, there was something tragic.”

—Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

November, 1934. Marchena Island, Galápagos Archipelago

Lorenz and Nuggerud were asleep at the bottom of their boat when they made landfall. They did not venture far from it in the months that followed. The fitful seas had done the work of forcing them up past the breakers and onto the burnt charcoal shoreline of Marchena Island. It was a dead, foreign place. A crumbling remnant of an ancient volcano sixty miles north of any semblance of civilization.

The black sands of the beach had been pushed high up onto the jagged lava fields after a millenia of rough tide. As a result, the sea had left the little home-made boat high up onto the beach—deposited and abandoned at low tide. The landscape of the surrounding island was desolate. Blasted like the surface of the moon. Or something stranger: Mars. No plants grew there. No animals and no water.

The boat was a wreck. Splintered gashes marred its sun-bleached hull. The surrounding volcanic sand was so hard-packed that even now, months after its landing, the boat still shivered against the harsh winds blowing in from the fretful waters of the Galápagos. Nuggerud lay with his back against the port side of the boat. He was partially

covered by a bit of ragged fabric attached to a crumbling gunwale. Some small attempt to escape exposure on the flat, lifeless island.

Above and past the boat some twenty meters lay Lorenz. His was obscured by low hanging fog, which drifted almost peacefully across the beach. It thinned as it rose higher inland, still hiding all but the highest of jagged peaks above.

Lorenz's fine, blonde hair danced lively in the wind as the rest of him rested still upon the bare ground. High above the men, atop a wooden pole, flapped a heavy canvas signal flag. It was the only sound to be heard on the whole of Marchena Island. Like a rug being beaten for spring cleaning. Like the sound of a body bouncing. A signal no sailor had seen, though many passed nearby.

Lorenz was face down in the moist sand, lying on his side. One cheek rested against the Earth. One arm folded beneath him in a cramped, uncomfortable way, his hand clasped tightly against his heart over his chest. The other rested near his gaunt face with the palm open as if he may have been shading his eyes against the sun before giving out of the strength to do so. In total, his posture read of a boy, frightened, curled up to a near fetal position to go to sleep. His camera, the only possession he had ever truly cared about, lay discarded and broken at his side.

But he was not asleep. Both men's faces were sun-dried and withered by wind and weather. Their clothes were fraying apart at the seams in the open air. Bodies contorted into uncanny positions by the agony of dehydration.

From their position, marooned on the barren Marchena, there would have been nothing to do—nothing even to look upon. Just an infinity of waves, maybe an exciting few seconds as a dusky lava gull came within view before returning to an island that held

something for it. The clouds, gathering around the highest peaks of Marchena, obscured the sun as night engulfed the archipelago. The warmth of the day disappeared to be replaced with a sudden chill.

Out past the breakers to the south, an American fishing boat slowed and blew its steam whistle. Men rushed across its deck firing shots into the air from their rifles. They pointed at the beach, leaning over the gunwales, and directed the vessel in to investigate.

NOTES ON SOURCES

Everything that happens in this historical novel is true, at least to the person telling their version of events. Often, these accounts are from first hand sources, when possible, though some are second hand articles, and others almost surely complete fabrications intended to draw readers and sell magazines.

Herein contained are many conflicting reports regarding the same events, each as believable as the others. To construct this narrative I have sifted through as many of these accounts of the island of Floreana and its human history as possible, and constructed a Frankenstein's monster of their content for reference. I then interpreted these perspectives in a novelistic form using invented dialogue that, if not 100 percent accurate to the word, hopefully represents the feeling and intent of the real people depicted.

What follows is an accounting of where each source was used in each chapter to the best of my ability.

Chapter 1: Prologue

For the adventures of Thomas Chappel and Thomas Nickerson on Charles Island the narrative, dialogue, and dates were informed by the cabin boy, Thomas Nickerson's personal account of the events in his *Account of the Ship Essex Sinking*, as well as Nathaniel Philbrick's non-fictional account of the voyage of the Essex *In the Heart of the*

Sea: The Tragedy of the Whaleship Essex, and finally the colorful but perhaps less trustworthy article written by David Porter, “Cruise of the Essex.”

Chapter 2 and Chapter 14

The final voyage of Rudolf Lorenz and Captain Nuggerud was pieced together from accounts of the tragedy by Waldo L. Schmitt in “Hancock-Galápagos Expedition, 1934-1935 Diary,” John Treherne's own attempt to explain the disappearances on Floreana in *The Galápagos Affair*, Margret and Heinz Wittmer's “What Happened on the Galápagos?”, Margret Wittmer's *Floreana*, and finally the Postscript of Dore Strauch's *Satan Came to Eden* written first hand by the man who discovered Lorenz on Marchena Island, Captain G Allan Hancock.

Chapter 3 and 4

The chapters taking place in Charlottenburg, Berlin were informed entirely by Friedrich Ritter's somewhat boastful and self-delusional article for *Atlantic Monthly* entitled “Adam and Eve in the Galápagos” as well as Dore Strauch's memoir, *Satan Came to Eden*.

Chapter 5 and 6

These chapters deal mostly with the arrival of the Ritters to Floreana, which was informed by a combination of both Friedrich Ritter's “Adam and Eve in the Galápagos” for the dates, personal history, and practicalities, and Dore Strauch's, *Satan Came to Eden* for the interpersonal relationships and account of mood and place description. Herman

Melville's mood and place in *The Encantatas* also contributed to description of Floreana. Ritter's meticulous accounting of establishing the homestead, Friedo in his article comprised most of Chapter 5. J. F. Schimpff's *American Weekly* article "By a Modern "Robinson Crusoe: Experiences in Back to nature Existence on Floreana Island" also informed details to the homestead and its discovery.

Chapter 7

Strauch's memoir, *Satan Came to Eden* made numerous mentions of the native boy Hugo, whose story was contained in Chapter 6. Ritter's accounts mentioned no such person on the island, most likely to attempt to hide the fact that he was no true lone Crusoe, surviving against all odds on an uninhabited island.

Chapter 8

The details of Dr. Ritter and Dore's battle against the "Devil Boar" was most widely, and I would even go so far as to say obsessively, detailed in Ritter's "Satan Walks in the Garden," an article following his earlier one also appearing in *Atlantic Monthly*. Dore Strauch also lent a less troubling, though more supernatural perspective on the event in *Satan Came to Eden*.

Chapter 9

The account of the hateful letter that has Ritter in such a foul mood is from his final article for *Atlantic Monthly*, entitled "Eve Calls it a Day". The rest of the chapter combines Heniz Wittmer's account of meeting the Ritters from "What Happened on the

Galápagos,” and Margret Wittmer's retelling of her meeting with the Ritters later on in *Floreana*. Dore Strauch also adds her perspective including the observations of the great wildfire in *Satan Came to Eden*. Some details concerning dialogue were also pulled from Vernon Lange's *The Wittmers of Floreana*, an unpublished manuscript.

Chapter 10 and 11

These three chapters were comprised of as wide of swath of reports as could be collected regarding the events. So much of what is reported here seems to conflict in various ways, and I don't doubt there to be certain exaggerations here and there. Most of the conversations in Friedo are informed by Dore Strauch's *Satan Came to Eden*, while much of the accounts of goings on outside of the Ritter homestead (Such as the actions taken by the Baroness) are communicated by Margret Wittmer in *Floreana* and Heinz Wittmer's portion in “What Happened on Galápagos”. Additional details concerning a good deal of the Baroness's depiction is informed by the above memoirs, but is supplemented with character detail and biographical information from John Treherne's *The Galápagos Affair*, Peter Sinep's self published *The Queen of Floreana*,

Chapter 12

The events surrounding the Baroness's mysterious disappearance are informed by, in addition to the accounts of Treherne, Strauch and the Wittmers, the Milwaukee Sentinel's “Galápagos Death Puzzle Linked to Island 'Empress',” the Miami Daily News's “Love, Jealousy Add to Mystery of Death on 'Enchanted Isles',” Hal Dunwoodie's “The Lust-Mad Empress of the Galápagos” from *Man's Daring Action* magazine, Friedrich

Ritter's "Letter to Captain G. Allan Hancock," and finally "Debunking the Baroness" by Walter Finsen.

Chapter 13

This is comprised completely of the dueling accounts of Ritter's death by the Wittmers in *Floreana* and "What Happened on Galápagos," and Dore Strauch in *Satan Came to Eden*. Dore details the moments leading up to the Wittmer's arrival in Friedo, and then Heinz Wittmer's account take precedent mostly from there.

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