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No one ever put the pieces together. Even years later, swapping rumors that couldn't be confirmed, they were sure that whatever caused the Whipples' sudden departure, the house packed up and everything gone, it must have been Ida's fault.

They thought they knew her. They thought this because she showed up to their children's birthday parties with tidy packages and joined their bridge games and baked a mean pumpkin pie, even though she'd never eaten pumpkin pie until she arrived in New England, or so she said. They thought they knew her because she shopped at Jordan Marsh and wore kitten heels and small hats and tea-length swing dresses, just like the rest of them. They thought they knew her because it was 1952, and she participated in their silent agreement that the best way to put the war years behind them was to keep up tradition, to lay Thanksgiving tables, string Christmas lights, and set off firecrackers on the Fourth of July. All of which Ida did with a smile.

It never crossed their minds that she was slowly collapsing. That she was thinking, *Screw you, Norma Jean*, as she waved across the parking lot of Marvin's Grocery at the woman who knew less than nothing about her. It didn't occur to them that she'd lied about her fresh pumpkin filling—she'd never baked a whole pumpkin in her life—mixing up canned pumpkin with a wry smile, or that on the days when she wanted to suffer more than usual, she slid a photograph of a dead woman under her girdle and thought about the friend she'd betrayed.

No one had any idea that she was a good wife but not a good mother.

What they did know, and tittered about behind her back, was that Ida kept her front door locked even when she was at home. No one in the town of Lexington, Massachusetts, locked their doors. Which, after the theft, they agreed was careless. The thing was, everyone knew everyone, and the riffraff never strayed this far outside of Boston, so who was there to worry about? Their children played all over the neighborhood, and if one of them was thirsty or needed to use the bathroom, their mothers liked knowing that any door was open to them, even the ones in the pristine, historic homes with towering pillars and wraparound porches. So long as no one tracked mud over the carpet, all were welcome.

The other mothers expected Sidney to put a stop to the whole locked-door business. He had grown up in one of those pristine houses, where his parents still lived with their trusting, open door. Ida didn't begrudge them this, or Sidney his happy childhood. She just wasn't going to follow their lead, and Sidney, despite what the neighbors presumed, would never ask her to. Fear was a complicated creature. He knew how it inhabited the body, burrowed into every cell so your veins pulsed and your muscles twitched with it. It didn't matter how much time had passed or how irrational the locked door was—if it made Ida feel safe, Sidney wasn't going to deny her that. It was her silent acknowledgment of their past, her way of telling him she'd never forget what she had done and that she didn't deserve to. And as much as Sidney wanted her to forget, the truth was, he didn't deserve to either.

During the war, it had been impossible to imagine a life after it. Now that Sidney was in that life, even all these years later, he felt a sense of bafflement. Walking down his quiet street from the train station after work, or mowing his lawn, he'd find himself consumed with the absurdity of it all. How does a person bomb and shoot and maim other human beings and then come home and mow the lawn? No one talked about the images that flashed behind closed lids or the dreams that jolted a man awake. Coming home was the dream, but home looked different through marred eyes.

With his parents living down the road, church on Sunday, and roast for dinner, Sidney was forced to face the privilege and ignorance of his upbringing, a naivete that had driven him to believe enlisting was the

bravest thing he could do. He'd wanted to fight so badly he signed up for the Air Force three months before graduating from Boston University. It was February 1941. Within a year, he'd pinned on his blue bars, was appointed flight officer, and received a direct commission from the Eighth Air Force, shipping out to England with all the excitement of a twenty-two-year-old who thinks he knows everything. Sidney had been the kind of teenager who punched other boys for no good reason, which was why he'd thought war would suit him.

It didn't. Two years in, he sat in a field in France watching his closest friend, Sergeant James Freedman—a Chicagoan, stonemason by trade, fiancé, son, and brother—bleed out from a hole in his skull. The sun was bright, the grass a stunning green, the blood from the man's temple a brilliant red. There was the scent of fresh hay and burning metal in the air. James had latched his hand around Sidney's neck with startling force and pulled his face down so that their noses touched. "Whatever you do, don't let me die," he'd said. Sidney had locked eyes with his friend and promised he wouldn't.

Sidney thought about that lie every morning on his train ride to work. He thought about his brothers who had been killed in the South Pacific and wondered why he was the one who got to live. He had come home a hero simply because he'd survived. No one cared how he'd done it. No one chastised him for bringing home a wife and child without officially breaking it off with his fiancée. They cheered him, and this dug his guilt in a little deeper.

His was a cowardly survival. For years, he had been telling Ida that there is no guilt in war. One's actions are excused in trying to stay alive. A person does whatever it takes. But this was just a game of words. Neither of them actually believed it.

Swept up in his hero status, in his role as the sole surviving son, in the whirlwind of domestic life and his love for his wife and children, Sidney was convinced that the past would fade. And it had, to a certain extent. His raw edge of feeling was healed to a tender patch of scars.

And yet, lies don't go away simply because no one knows the truth.