

*The Things
We Cherished*

One

PHILADELPHIA, 2009

“You know, don’t you, that you’re looking at twenty-five to life?” Charlotte peered over the top of the file at the seventeen-year-old with the rows of tiny braids who slouched in the chair on the other side of the graffiti-covered table, staring intently at his sneakers.

The preliminary hearing had not gone well. Charlotte had hoped that the judge would take one look at Marquan’s baby face, with its wide smooth cheeks and the unblinking almond-shaped eyes, and know that he was not a danger to anyone, that he did not belong here. She thought that Judge Annette D’Amici, who herself had once been a public defender, might have a soft spot for a teenager with no record of prior violence who was about the same age as her grandchildren. But in a streak of phenomenally bad luck, Judge D’Amici had called in sick, replaced for the day by Paul Rodgers. Rodgers, a political wannabe who viewed the bench as a stepping-stone to a higher state office, had earned a reputation as a hanging judge during his first term. He barely glanced at Marquan before banging his gavel and remanding him to the juvenile wing of the city prison.

Normally, Charlotte would have chalked the hearing up as a loss and gone on to her next file and courtroom, dispensing with

the morning's caseload. But Marquan was different. They had met almost two years earlier when he'd been a scared fifteen-year-old brought in on a petty drug charge. There was a sparkle that told her he had intelligence, a quiet dignity in his perfect posture and the way he looked at her with those somber brown eyes, seeming to see right through. He had promise. She'd done all the things she usually didn't get to do with a docket of thousands of cases per year: getting Marquan into a first-time offenders' track that left him with no permanent record, as well as an after-school mentoring program in his neighborhood. So why was he sitting here now, dull-eyed and hardened, facing a murder charge for a carjacking gone wrong?

Because it simply wasn't enough. The after-school programs amounted to only a few hours per week, a drop in an ocean of poverty and drugs and violence and boredom in which these kids had to swim every night on the streets. There had been a police chase that ended with an SUV crushed against the pavement steps of a row house, two small children pinned fatally beneath its wheels. Marquan hadn't meant to hurt anyone; of that she was certain. He had a little brother the same age as those kids, whom he walked to school every day, escorted home again each evening. No, he had simply been along for the ride when the stupid plan was hatched and he didn't have the strength or good sense to say no.

Charlotte drummed the edge of the table, running her fingers along a heart that someone had carved into the wood with a knife. "If you would testify," she began. There had been three boys in the car, but Marquan was the only one who had not fled the scene. "I mean, if you're willing to say who was there with you . . ."

She did not finish the sentence, knowing the proposal was futile. No one talked where Marquan came from. *DON'T SNITCH!*

screamed the brazen T-shirts of the kids she passed in the Gallery food court at lunch, kids ditching school and hanging out, waiting for trouble to find them. Snitching meant never going home again, never closing your eyes and knowing if you or your loved ones would be safe. Marquan would sooner take the sentence.

She exhaled sharply, glancing up at the water-stained ceiling. “Anything you want to tell me?” she asked, closing the file, watching for the imperceptible shake of his head. “If you change your mind, or if you need something, have your case officer call me.” She pushed back from the table and stood, knocking on the door to be let out.

A few minutes later, Charlotte stepped from the elevator and made her way across the lobby of the Criminal Justice Center, thronged with prospective jurors and families of the victims and the accused who pushed past the metal detector toward the security desk for information. On the street, she swam through a cloud of cigarette smoke left by courthouse clerks lingering before the start of their day, then paused, her eyes traveling left toward the hulking Reading Terminal Market. A walk through the open stalls, a gastronomic world’s fair touting everything from Amish delicacies to lo mein and cheesesteaks, would have been just the thing to clear her head, but there wasn’t time.

As she reached the busy intersection beneath the shadow of City Hall, William Penn peering down piously from his perch atop the tower, Charlotte paused, inhaling the crisp late-September air. There were only a few days like this each fall in Philadelphia, before the persistent humidity of summer gave way to the cold rainy winter.

Still thinking of Marquan, Charlotte entered the office building. On the sixth floor, she stepped out of the elevator and proceeded down the drab corridor. The voice of section chief Mitch Ramirez,

arguing with a prosecutor, bellowed through an open doorway. “Are you going to fucking tell me . . . ?” Charlotte smiled as she passed. Mitch was a legend among the defenders, a seventy-two-year-old dinosaur who had marched in the civil rights protests of the sixties and could still go toe to toe with the best of them when he thought his client was getting a raw deal.

She stopped before the door to her office, indiscernible from the others she had just passed. It wasn’t much; a glorified closet, really, with a small desk and two chairs wedged close together—a far cry from the marble and mahogany suite she’d had when she was a summer associate at a large New York firm. But it was all hers. It had taken two years just to get it, to fight her way out of the pit of rookie defenders who shared the sea of cubicles one floor below and have a door that closed so she could hear herself think.

Charlotte reached for the handle, then stopped, studying it. The door was ajar. She was certain that she had closed it when she left for court that morning, but perhaps one of the other attorneys had dropped off a file. As she stepped inside, her breath caught.

There, in the narrow chair across from her desk, sat her ex-boyfriend.

“Brian?” she asked, as though unsure of his name. The word came out in a croak.

He stood, unfolding from the chair. Brian had the tall, broad-shouldered frame that fashion houses paid good money for, brown hair that flopped improbably to his forehead no matter how many times he got it cut to a shorter, more professional length. Despite the muscular arms that suggested a threat on the basketball court, he conveyed an air of vulnerability that implied he might cry at a chick flick and made women want to take care of him.

Looking at him now, it was almost possible to forget that he had broken her heart.

“Hello, Charlotte,” he said, his use of her full name a reminder of the years that had come and gone since their last meeting. He bent to kiss her and a hint of his familiar Burberry cologne tickled her nose, sending her places she had hoped never to go again. “You’re looking well.” He brushed off his legs, his expensive suit woefully out of place in her tiny drab office. She was suddenly self-conscious about her black knit pantsuit, practical and unflattering. His Chanel-and-heels wife would not have been caught dead in it.

He waited for her to speak, then filled the silence when she did not. “I didn’t mean to startle you. Your secretary let me in.”

She did not, Charlotte reminded herself, have a secretary. He must have been referring to Doreen, the office admin. Doreen was usually too busy updating her Facebook page to help visitors, but it was easy to see how Brian might have charmed her into unlocking the office and letting him wait. She studied him again. There was a paunch that bespoke too many overpriced steakhouse dinners, missed visits to the racquet club he once frequented daily. But he still had that appeal that had sucked her in almost a decade ago—that had gotten her in trouble in the first place.

She took a deep breath, centered herself. “What are you doing here?”

His expression changed as he processed the new rules of the game: pleasantries were to be dispensed with, business stated. “I’m in town for work and I was hoping to talk to you about something.”

You’ve left Danielle, she thought suddenly. Realized after all these years that you made a fatal mistake, that I was the one. The scenario rushed through her head: his profuse apologies and tears, her eventual gracious acceptance and forgiveness. It would be messy, of course. There was the divorce, the question of whether to reside here or in New York. “About a case I’m working on,” he added.

The vision evaporated, a raindrop on a warm, humid day, so quickly gone she might have imagined it. So this isn't about us after all, she thought, feeling very foolish. Brian wanted something, but it wasn't her.

"Let me buy you lunch?" he asked.

She shook her head. Thirty seconds around Brian and he was already toying with her mind. She needed to get as far away from him as possible. "I can't. I'm due back in court in half an hour."

"Of course. Dinner then. Does six work?" She could see him calculating the time that the meal might take, whether he could make the nine o'clock train back to Manhattan. Back to Danielle. Her stomach twisted, the bile undiluted by the years.

For a second she considered taking back an ounce of the control that had been stolen from her all those years ago and declining his last-minute invitation. She might have plans after all. Usually they consisted of nothing more than Thai takeout in front of the television, a hot night of *CSI* reruns with her cat, Mitzi, but he didn't have to know that. Her curiosity was piqued, though. Did Brian really have business in Philadelphia or had he come all this way just to see her? And what on earth could it be about?

"All right," she replied, trying to sound casual.

"Buddakan?" The choice was an obvious out-of-towner selection, one of the pricey Stephen Starr restaurants that received national attention and spawned a clone of the venue in New York. The furthest thing possible from the quiet BYOBs she loved, like the Northern Italian one in Greenwich Village they had frequented as students, its name faded with the years.

She considered suggesting an alternative venue like Santori's, a Greek trattoria in her neighborhood, with its gorgeous hummus plate and complimentary ouzo shot at the end of the meal. But this

was not a social call and she didn't need Brian invading that part of her world. "Fine."

"I'll let you work then," he said, walking from the office, not looking back. That was Brian. He treated life like a movie set—when he left a scene, the lights went out and it simply ceased to exist.

It was not until the door closed behind him that she sank to the chair, trying not to shake.

They had met during law school while interning with the war crimes tribunal at The Hague, assisting with the prosecution of genocide in the former Yugoslavia. She could still remember walking into the tiny Dutch bar, and seeing Brian for the first time. He was holding court amidst a semicircle of other interns, mostly female. She'd stood there for several seconds, staring at him in spite of herself. Though she could not hear what he was saying, there was something in the way he spoke that captivated her, a confident manner that seemed larger than life. His head turned in her direction. Embarrassed, she started to look away, but then his gaze caught hers and she was paralyzed, unable to move.

A minute later, he broke from his minions and made his way to Charlotte, holding out a second beer as though he'd been waiting for her. "Brian Warrington."

"Charlotte Gold," she managed, trying not to stammer.

"I know. You're the Root Tilden from NYU, right?" She hesitated, taken aback. She had not expected him to know who she was or that she'd received the prestigious public-interest fellowship. "I'm at Columbia. I think we're both assigned to the Dukovic case. Your memo on the evidentiary issue was very impressive." She fought the urge to swoon. "I'd like to get your take on one of my witnesses." Just then, the jazz band that had been setting up in the corner started to play and the voices around them were raised to a din.

“There’s a little bistro just down the street that’s quieter. Want to go get something to eat?” Too surprised to answer, Charlotte nodded and followed him from the bar, feeling the stares of the other interns behind her.

After that, they were inseparable. They fell in love over Belgian beer and heated debates about the efficacy of the proposed International Criminal Court. When they returned to Manhattan that fall, she abandoned her Greenwich Village dorm room, accepting his invitation to move into his Upper West Side apartment.

Though it had not been obvious from their egalitarian Dutch housing, she quickly realized once back home that Brian was wealthy. She found herself swept along to warm fall weekends in the Hamptons, holidays at his parents’ estate in Chappaqua. She spent less time at school, traveling downtown only for classes. They made plans for after graduation, fellowships with the UN, a short engagement.

Her idyllic world came crashing to a halt in December when she traveled to Philadelphia for what was supposed to be a brief holiday visit with her mother, Winnie, a retired math teacher. The first morning over breakfast, her mother broke the news that she had been keeping until after Charlotte finished final exams: small-cell lung cancer brought on, she suspected, by a smoking habit abandoned years earlier. By the time the persistent cough she’d taken to be allergies had sent her for a chest X-ray it was too late—she was stage four and had just months to live.

Winnie refused to let her take the semester off, so Charlotte commuted back and forth every weekend on Amtrak, watching with disbelief the speed with which her once-strong mother deteriorated. Brian offered to come along, of course, but she always declined, embarrassed to have him see the tiny suburban condo with its dilapidated furniture and yellowed walls. He didn’t fight

her on it but retreated gracefully, glad to be excused from the messiness of a life not his own. The time apart and her constant worry began to take its toll on their relationship and by March, when her mother had been discharged a final time to hospice care, Charlotte returned to New York to find a strange tube of lipstick beneath the vanity in the bathroom. Later she would wonder if perhaps he left it there purposely, a final act of passive-aggressiveness designed to hasten things to their inevitable conclusion.

She had confronted him that gray afternoon, hoping for denial or at least an explanation, ready to forgive. It was a day still damp and chilly enough to be called winter, their breath foggy in front of them as they clutched Styrofoam cups of coffee that neither actually drank. He looked down at the bench in the southeast corner of Washington Square Park that they had shared in happier times, now defiled because it would always be remembered for this. His face seemed a caricature of itself, drawn and weak. As he started to talk, she braced herself for the platitudes, that they had grown apart, it was just one of those things.

“I’ve met someone,” he said bluntly.

A rock slammed into her stomach. “Her name’s Danielle,” he continued. “She went to Harvard, two years ahead of us.” Of course. Because she couldn’t have been someone vacuous and trite. An image flashed through her mind of the holiday party at the firm where Brian was clerking this year. Through the haze of worry and despair over her mother, Charlotte recalled a sleek blond junior associate, a conversation about summer houses to which she could not at all relate.

“I’m sorry,” he finished. There were a thousand questions she wanted to ask about why and when and how. But he was already throwing his cup in the trash and straightening his coat, eager to move on to this new chapter of his life.

Three weeks later, she would learn the rest of the story. She opened the Sunday *Times* over breakfast and saw the engagement announcement, the happy couple staring back at her, Danielle's smile wider and more perfect than she remembered. She was flooded with disbelief. In the weeks since Brian told her about his new relationship, Charlotte had consoled herself over pints of Häagen-Dazs and bottles of wine, telling herself that it was nothing serious. Danielle was just the rebound until he figured things out. But in that moment, the truth came home to roost: Brian and Danielle were engaged. How long had they been seeing each other behind her back?

Unable to look away, she forced herself to continue reading. And somewhere between learning that Brian's grandfather had been CEO of a Fortune 250 company and that the bride would be keeping her name, she felt a sudden sense of release, like the air being let out of a balloon. She was relieved to have been excused from a world where she did not belong, a student given permission to change majors or drop a class that was too hard.

Giving up the rest was easy after that, and she turned down the fellowship to The Hague that she had been scheduled to start after graduation. Instead, she applied for and got the public defender position, returning to Philadelphia and slipping into the city like a pair of comfy old shoes.

That night at five minutes to six, Charlotte stepped out of a cab at Third and Chestnut and glanced down the street in both directions. Old City, once the province of Ben Franklin and the Founding Fathers, was now Philadelphia's version of trendy and she seldom ventured down to the endless rows of hip bars and restaurants that maligned the Federalist architecture of the neighborhood. Two blocks west, laughter spilled over from the throngs of tourists departing Independence Hall and the Liberty Bell as

they boarded their motor coaches for home. A swath of parkland across the street sat in improbable late-day stillness, sunlight slating through the crisp leaves.

Charlotte paused, wishing she'd been able to override her normal tendencies and arrive casually late. For a minute she considered circling the block, stalling for time to compose herself. But there was no point in delaying the inevitable—the sooner she met with Brian, the sooner she could put him and his devilish green eyes back on that train to New York.

As she approached the restaurant, she studied her reflection in the glass window of an adjacent store, smoothing her shoulder-length brown hair. There hadn't been time to go home—the modest Queen Village townhouse she'd bought before the neighborhood had become fashionable was a thirty-five-minute walk from the office, pleasant enough on a nice day, but too far in the wrong direction to make it before dinner. So after work she had stopped in Macy's, the city's one surviving department store. Resisting the urge to buy a new outfit entirely, she settled instead for a crème silk blouse to replace the knit top she'd worn previously under her suit and some makeup and perfume from samples at the Clinique counter.

Inside, Charlotte lingered uncertainly by the reservation desk, adjusting her eyes to the dimmer lighting. The Asian fusion restaurant was a cavernous sea of tables, walls draped in red silk, a massive gold Buddha statue dominating one side of the room. A dozen or more chefs bustled behind clouds of steam in the open kitchen to the rear. At the bar to the left, young twentysomethings tried to impress one another over brightly colored ten-dollar cocktails.

"Can I help you?" the hostess asked without interest. Charlotte did not answer but scanned the room, spotting Brian at a table to the rear. That was unexpected; early was not his style, the notion of

waiting for others unpalatable to him. As she approached, he stood, hurriedly tucking a BlackBerry into his jacket pocket.

“Thanks for joining me,” he said, sounding like he meant it.

She studied the menu the waitress handed her as she sat, grateful for the reprieve. “Grey Goose martini, up, extra olives,” she said. She did not usually drink hard liquor on a work night, but the circumstances called for an exception.

“Same,” he said, surprising her again. Brian was strictly a beer drinker, or had been anyway.

“So you’re in town for a case?” she asked when the waitress had returned with their drinks and taken their dinner order, a lobster pad thai for her, sesame tuna for him. He did not, she noticed, order an appetizer, further evidence of his hurry to get back to New York and Danielle. Pain stabbed at her stomach as she relived the rejection of a decade ago all over again. But she had not asked for this meeting, she reminded herself; he wanted to see her. “Depositions?” She was suddenly aware of her own Philadelphia accent, the way she seemed to have gone vocally native again in the years since she had returned.

“Just passing through,” he replied, his own pronunciation devoid of geographical markings. “I had a meeting in Washington this morning.” He was usually so precise, but there was a vagueness now to his words that made her wonder if he was telling the truth. Had he come down from New York just to speak with her?

“How have you been?” he asked, and if the question was just a pleasantry, a necessary step to get where he wanted to go, he gave no indication—his face and voice conveyed genuine curiosity. He had always had the ability to make anyone think he was on their side, sincerely concerned with their best interests—which was exactly what made him so dangerous. She had not suspected any-

thing was wrong, until the very moment he told her he was leaving for someone else.

“Great,” she replied, a beat too quickly. She suddenly felt naked, exposed. “I’m working with juveniles . . .” She almost tuned herself out as she rattled on, wearing her job like a cloak. But the work, about which she was usually so passionate, sounded provincial, unsophisticated. “And you?”

“Fine. I just came off a two-month securities trial and we, that is, Dani . . .” He hesitated, as though for a moment he had forgotten the impropriety of speaking about his wife to the woman he had left for her. As though Charlotte were anyone. “Anyway, a vacation would be nice. Maybe Aspen.”

Charlotte imagined the two of them swooshing through the powder in perfect unison. She had always been a train wreck on skis, a menace to herself and those around her. “But then this new matter came up,” he added, as she took a large swallow of her drink, steeling herself. “That’s why I wanted to see you.”

“Me?” she blurted out, louder than intended, nearly choking on the liquid. Brian was a securities litigator, defending lawsuits for the biggest brokerage houses in the country. What kind of matter could he possibly want to discuss with her?

He took a sip of martini, grimacing. “It’s a pro bono matter.”

Charlotte faltered, caught off guard. Pro bono work had never been Brian’s thing—he had empathy for the less fortunate on an abstract, policy level, a sort of noblesse oblige inherent in his liberal, upper-class background. But he couldn’t deal with the messiness that surrounded the actual clientele, the ambiguity of the individual cases. What had he gotten himself into now? It must be something high profile, she decided, a death penalty case, perhaps. Her annoyance rose. Firms were taking those on with increas-

ing frequency because of the good press that usually ensued. But despite their resources, they were ill equipped to handle matters requiring such specialized expertise. And now he was here asking her for free advice.

The waitress returned to the table and set a plate in front of Brian. The food was served family-style, Charlotte recalled from her one previous visit, which seemed code for we-bring-out-whatever-we-want-whenever-we-feel-like-it. She shook her head as he gestured toward the plate, offering her some. “Go ahead and eat.”

She expected him to reach for his fork and tear into the meal with the gusto she remembered, but he did not. “Have you ever heard of Roger Dykmans?” he asked instead.

She repeated the name inwardly. “I don’t know. The last name, maybe.”

“Roger is a securities client of mine. His brother was Hans Dykmans.”

Hans Dykmans. The full name sparked immediate recognition. “The diplomat?” Hans Dykmans, like Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg and German industrialist Oskar Schindler, had been credited with saving thousands of Jews during the Holocaust. Like Wallenberg, he was arrested and disappeared mysteriously toward the end of the war.

“Yes. Roger is Hans’s younger brother and the head of a major international brokerage house. Only now he’s been arrested and charged as a war criminal for allegedly helping the Germans.” Brian paused, watching Charlotte’s face for a reaction to the possibility that the brother of a war hero might have been a Nazi collaborator. But she was not as surprised as he might have expected. She had learned years ago that the extreme circumstances of the

war provoked a wide spectrum of reactions, even in the closest of families.

Brian waited until the server put Charlotte's plate down in front of her before continuing. "Recently, historians uncovered some papers that seem to implicate Roger. They claim he sold out his brother during the war, and that as a result, Hans was arrested and several hundred Jewish children he was trying to save were killed."

Staring down at the scarlet tablecloth, Charlotte recoiled. She herself was the descendant of Holocaust survivors, or more accurately, one survivor. Her mother had escaped Hungary as a child, sent on a *kindertransport* to London and later to relatives in America. But the rest of her mother's family, her parents and brothers, had all perished in the camps. Many times in Winnie's lonely final days, Charlotte had wondered how different her life might have been had her mother grown up surrounded by a loving family, rather than distant cousins who took her in out of obligation. Their coolness, Charlotte suspected, was what had sent her mother flying into the arms of the first man who ever glanced her way, and who would quickly break her heart, leaving her pregnant and alone.

She looked up at Brian, who was watching her expectantly, waiting for some kind of response. "So Dykmans is a Nazi collaborator," she said finally. "And you're trying to defend him."

"Accused collaborator." He shrugged, taking a bite of his tuna. "He's my client. I was asked by the partnership to take on the matter."

"And you're here for my help," she concluded, irritated. Did Brian not remember her family history or simply not care what the nature of his request would mean to her? "Why me?"

Brian blinked several times, as though not accustomed to such bluntness. Of course not. He had spent the intervening years traveling in the social circles of the eternally polite, practicing the for-

malities of large-firm conference rooms and cocktail parties that made Charlotte want to scream and crawl out of her skin. He had not lived in the rough-and-tumble inner-city court system, where no one had time for niceties or the inclination to be circumspect. “Well,” he began slowly. “Because of your background, for one thing.”

She nodded, then looked over her shoulder, as though someone might overhear. The fact that she’d been a doctoral student in history before turning to the law, though not exactly a secret, was not something she had shared with anyone in Philadelphia. She had spent three years in Eastern Europe on a Fulbright and other fellowships, researching the Holocaust. Her work, focusing on issues that had arisen after the war, like restitution of Jewish property and preservation of the concentration camps, was groundbreaking at the time, and she’d published some articles that had garnered a small amount of notoriety—not to mention a circle of valuable contacts. Originally, she had gone to law school planning to combine her interest in foreign affairs with a legal career, but then Winnie’s death and Brian’s betrayal came crashing down on her. So she’d applied for the position with the defender’s office in Philadelphia, omitting any mention of her Holocaust work because no one here would have cared, much less believed she was seriously interested in a low-paying, public-interest job with those credentials.

“But it’s more than that really,” Brian hastened to add. “I mean, I’ve got the firm’s resources. I can hire the world’s top experts, get anyone I need on the phone. We have two former cabinet members who are of counsel, for Christ’s sake.” He lowered his head and laced his hands behind it, then leaned back. “But your forensic skills are so goddamned good, always were.”

She had forgotten his propensity to swear nonstop when making a point. He thought it gave him a certain machismo, made him

seem tough, one of the boys. But to her it always felt forced and indicative of a certain lack of creativity. “Remember the Dukovic case?” he asked.

She nodded. Dukovic had been a Bosnian war criminal, accused of the murder of dozens of Croats. At the last minute, the lone witness against him, a twelve-year-old girl who had managed to survive months of imprisonment, torture, and rape, became too afraid to testify. It looked like Dukovic would walk for lack of evidence. But Charlotte had spent days poring over the documents, piecing together a way to link him to the atrocities through circumstantial evidence—and she finally persuaded the girl to testify. Dukovic was sentenced to a lifetime in prison.

“And you care,” he added. “I mean, look where you are.” He gestured around the restaurant, but she knew he did not mean Budakan literally. He was talking about the grittiness of her job, the fact that she was down in the trenches fighting for people who had little. “You care that people get a good defense, that innocents are not wrongfully convicted.”

But Dykmans is nothing like my clients, she thought. He’s a wealthy man with resources. “Where’s he being held?”

“Germany.”

“I didn’t think the Germans were pursuing their war crimes cases.”

“They weren’t, until about a year ago. But the Wiesenthal Center and the Department of Justice called them out on it until the pressure became too much.”

“I wish I could help you—” she said, starting to demur.

But Brian raised his hand, interrupting. “An old man is going to jail for the rest of his life,” he said, eyes wide. “He deserves a fair trial.”

Charlotte’s exasperation bubbled over to anger. Did Brian think

it was that easy, that if he played on her sense of justice she would simply capitulate to his will? It was as if he viewed her compassion as a weakness to be exploited. Brian's words echoed back at her: a fair trial. I've got a dozen kids sitting in jail across town who won't get that much, she wanted to say. But he wouldn't understand.

"What is it that you want me to do?" she asked instead. "I mean, I'm hardly qualified to try the case in Germany."

"Of course not. We've got the best firm in Europe handling that." An expression that Charlotte could not decipher passed across Brian's face, then disappeared. "No, what I'm looking for are your forensic skills. We need help figuring out what we're missing, what Dykmans isn't telling us."

"I don't understand."

"He won't talk to us."

"You mean he won't cooperate in his own defense?" Brian nodded. "So he admits to doing it?"

"No, he just won't say that he didn't, or help us find any evidence to prove that."

Because he doesn't want to incriminate himself, Charlotte thought. She started to ask whether Brian thought Dykmans was innocent. Then, her defender's instincts returning, she decided against it.

"Why do you care so much anyway?" she asked instead, raising her hand as Brian opened his mouth. "And don't give me another truth-and-justice speech. I want the real story."

An indignant look crossed his face and she expected him to protest that this was all for the greater good. Then his expression seemed to crumble. She had always been able to break through his veneer in a way that no one else (not even his wife, she suspected) could. "It's about the partnership," he said finally in a low voice.

Of course, she thought, as the pieces of the puzzle began to fall

into place. Brian was almost nine years into practice, right about the time when he would be considered for partner. “Dykman is a major client,” he continued. “I’ve basically been told that if I can get him acquitted, I’ll make it. And if not . . .”

He did not have to finish the sentence. Associates who did not make partner at the big firms had a limited shelf life of a year, maybe two. Then they were expected to go in-house to a company or find something else to do, all less promising options that were surely unthinkable to Brian.

She scooped up some of the pad thai with her chopsticks and popped it in her mouth, chewing as she considered. The whole scenario was utterly surreal. Brian needed her help defending a Nazi collaborator. Accused Nazi collaborator. Not that there was anything personal or particularly flattering about it. He had come to her because she was, quite simply, the person who had what he needed, like a plumber when the toilet was stopped up or a mechanic for a broken-down car.

But the real question still lay unasked and unanswered. Why should she do it? Brian had broken her heart, taken everything from her. She owed him nothing.

Yet even as she prepared to deny his request, something in her stirred. She remembered her days in the dusty European archives, trying to piece together what had happened, bring some justice to those who could no longer speak for themselves. She’d loved the subject matter, but had been frustrated by its remote, abstract nature. Working on the Dykman matter might finally be the chance to bring together her international and legal interests, in the way she’d hoped a decade earlier. Her interest was piqued. “I have some vacation coming up,” she said finally. “I can schedule it next month and then—”

“That won’t work,” he interjected, cutting her off in a manner

just short of rude. “Roger’s trial is in four weeks. We need to find the evidence to clear him and we need to do it now.”

Her chopsticks clattered to the plate. “Four weeks?” Four weeks out they should be polishing their witnesses, practicing arguments in a mock trial—not searching for evidence.

“I know. It’s far from ideal.” She watched him, waiting for an explanation as to the last-minute nature of his request, but he looked back, unblinking and silent.

So he expected her to drop everything in her life and come running. “I can’t.”

“Dykman is a wealthy man. You can name your price.”

Charlotte hesitated. It had not occurred to her to ask for money. “I want Kate Dolgenos.”

“Excuse me?” It was clearly not the response he’d anticipated.

“She’s the best criminal defense attorney in your firm, right?” And in the country, she thought, as Brian nodded. “I want her to come down and handle the preliminary hearing for one of my clients next week. It’s a juvenile felony case.” It was the only way she could bring herself to leave Marquan—to place him in the hands of someone better.

“But Dolgenos handles white-collar crime. She won’t—”

“And I want her well prepared,” Charlotte persisted. “Not just zooming in at the eleventh hour. She needs to meet my client first.”

He opened his mouth to protest, then closed it again. “Fine.”

Charlotte bit her lip uncertainly. She had asked for the moon, not expecting him to call her bluff and actually agree to her terms. Her thoughts turned to her caseload back at the office. “I can give you a week,” she said. In reality, she could get more. She hadn’t taken a vacation in almost two years, a fact that was a source of ribbing around the office. Despite their workload, her boss would give her the time willingly and her colleagues could cover anything that

came up. But she needed to preserve an emergency escape, a way out in case working with Brian proved to be too much. And a week was all, maybe more than, he deserved.

He exhaled, the relief visible on his face. “Great.” He waved the waitress over, signaling for the check. “Meet me at Newark Airport tomorrow night. The flight leaves at eight-fifteen.”

She brushed aside her annoyance at his presumption that she would say yes, the fact that undoubtedly he had already booked the tickets. “Where are we going?” she asked as he handed a platinum credit card to the waitress without looking at the check.

He pulled a business card from inside his jacket and handed it to her. “Germany. We need to go to Munich to talk to Dykmans’s attorneys.”

“Fine.” She drained her drink and stood, leaving the pad thai almost untouched before her. “See you tomorrow,” she mumbled, then started for the door. She could not bear to be the one who remained behind, watching him leave again.