

Enzio's house is just a few doors down, a two-family brick job. Enzio no longer rents out the downstairs. He tried about fifteen years ago and got into a bad situation with a bunch of gypsies. A Christmas wreath still hangs on the front door of the upstairs apartment, which is where he lives. An Italian flag dangles from a pole rigged on the ledge of a third-floor window. The flag is weather-bitten, ragged. The Virgin Mary in the front yard has a chipped nose. Next to her is a flattened garden that died with Maria. Enzio's near-mint 1962 Chevy Impala, driven sparingly, is under a blue tarp in the driveway.

They climb the short staircase up to the second-floor entrance. Enzio leaves his white Filas on a mat outside and asks Rena to take off her shoes.

"Really?" she says.

"I care about the carpets."

She nudges her feet out of her white Keds and kicks them onto the mat next to Enzio's sneakers. All these years, she's never been in his house. Not once. Not for coffee with Maria. Not anything.

It's exactly what she imagines. Totally from the past: green shag rug that's still in decent shape, plastic on the sofa. Elaborate vases. Paintings of vineyards and posters of Jesus on the walls. There's a heavy glass cigar ashtray on a coffee table covered in lace doilies and the smell of bad cologne in the air. The only thing out of place is the big-screen TV in the living room.

"You like the TV?" Enzio says, noticing her noticing it.

"It's big," she says.

"Sixty inches. Picture's great. Like having the movies in your house."

"I don't get these big TVs. Give me a little TV. That's fine. Why do I need to feel like I'm in a theater?"

"I'll show you the picture after. You'll be impressed."

Rena follows him into the kitchen. She takes a seat at the table. It's Formica, the top patterned with white and gold boomerangs. A saltshaker stands alone in the middle of the table, a hulking ring of keys snaked around it. She looks over at the refrigerator. No pictures, no magnets. Dirty dishes are toppled in the sink. Empty pizza boxes are stacked on top of the dish drain.

Enzio motions at the boxes and says, "The bachelor's life." He digs around under the sink and comes out with a dusty magnum of wine. He strips away the seal, humming, and uses a corkscrew key to yank the cork. He fills a couple of juice glasses, their flowered sides laced with smeary fingerprints, and gives one to her.

"Thanks," Rena says, lifting the glass up to her nose and taking a whiff.

"Larry does a great job with this," Enzio says. "He makes it down in his basement. I used to make it like that, but I got lazy. He's devoted." He comes over and sits across from her at the table, reaching out to clink her glass. "Salute."

Rena doesn't clink back. She sips the wine. It's fruity and heavy.

"The good stuff, right?" Enzio says.

"Not bad," she says.

"Not bad, my ass." He takes a long slug. "You want a cookie? What kind? Savoiardi? You're a savoiardi girl, I can tell."

"I'm good."

"Come on, have a cookie." He gets up and opens the refrigerator. The white box of cookies is on the top shelf, wrapped carefully in a plastic Pastosa bag. Keeping cookies in the refrigerator was a big no-no for Vic.

"I'm good."

"You sure? I'm having one." He peels back the plastic, opens the box, and takes out a seeded cookie. He munches on it, cupping his palm under his mouth to catch the crumbs. "I'm lonely eating this alone. Have one."

"I'd appreciate it if you'd quit with the cookies. I want one, you'll be the first to know."