

Eleanor thought it was ridiculous that she was getting to know her birth mother after twenty-six years of asking for the truth. Anyone could see that she did not resemble the Brambles—her adoptive parents. When Father Joseph spilled the beans and told everyone in the church a few months ago, Eleanor battled a vindictive, judgmental rant at everyone she had ever questioned. And then her father had introduced her birth father, and the planets shifted into alignment. Eleanor found the source of her long, straight nose, her almond-shaped eyes and dark, curly hair in the person of Andros Stavros. They had met twice but the second time, he gave her an unwieldy package—her mother’s journal filled with sketches, receipts, cards and photographs.

Reading her mother’s journal took Eleanor a month of evenings because she knew the ending and wanted to put it off. She understood the intersections of her mother Kate’s life with Andros and it had ended in tragedy. Who rushes toward tragedy? If Kate had seen the pattern like Eleanor in hindsight, would she have changed a thing?

Father Joseph was right about the messy collisions in their lives. Eleanor wiped away tears after she finished the last page of the journal. Perhaps Kate had stopped writing because she was happy. That single moment of joy might have accompanied the child’s birth, but according to Andros, a deeper post-partum depression had been waiting.

Eleanor placed the unwieldy journal back into the box that she had been given months ago. She tied it with a silky, rose-colored ribbon from a wedding she’d attended during that month. The ribbon was the only remnant of the bouquet from their table; the bride had insisted Eleanor take home it home with a nudge toward her date who was waiting with her coat. On their trek back to Wilmington, Eleanor had failed to speak more than polite responses to the man’s prompts. Her eyes lingered on the winter fields of brown reeds, bright green rye grass, and the pines nestled in patches of snow like shallow ponds where the wind left them. She had glanced down at the bright roses in the bouquet that she held and thought of Kate driving on that highway trek to the island and getting distracted. She thought about the accident that had ended her mother. The flowers had wilted and died while she finished reading Kate’s journal.

Eleanor searched through the rest of the artifacts from the box Andros had given her. After reading the journal, the sketches made more sense: the arches were interiors of the spires of St. Mark’s, the sweet angel was the face of the Blessed Mother in the garden at Saint Casimir, and the studies of buildings might have been from Kate’s bike courier days. Eleanor assumed that the many thumbnail sketches along the margins of the journal were people and scenes that she described in the journal. The business cards, scraps of sketches on napkins and corners of newspaper pages made Eleanor smile; the journal revealed Kate’s busy, creative mind.

Finally the large photograph of a group of well-dressed people under a blossoming tree made sense. In the center of the group, a fair-haired woman stood with Andros. His large frame dwarfed his bride. They were flanked by two elderly couples. The tall woman in an imposing hat next to Kate was Jane Gibson, whom Eleanor remembered as an old lady from the book store. Holding Jane Gibson’s hand, was a handsome man with thick hair and wire-rimmed glasses over fierce eyes. This might have been the last picture of David Gibson before his death. The couple next to Andros stood a little away from each other, but the woman looked something like Andros’ sister Mira Fuerza, so Eleanor assumed this was Andros’ mother who still lived above her boutique in Greenwich Village.

Eleanor examined the Sunday dress clothing of all those assembled for Kate and Andros’ wedding day. She examined each person and found the younger versions of Father Joseph standing in his cassock and collar. She wrote down the names of each person she thought she recognized and tucked the photograph into a notebook that she planned to take for her next meeting with

Andros. She smiled at the inscription in Kate's hand on the back of the photograph: *Angels and ghosts hovered in the apple tree that day. Andros Gregory and Kathryn Jane 1945 at our Lauraville house with family and friends.*

Eleanor shifted through the other photographs before placing the rest atop the journal. A thick snapshot was pasted to a scene of a cottage perched right on the beach with the breakers visible in the distance. As she peeled it away, her breath caught. She recognized Father Joseph again, but this time he wore baptismal vestments and held a baby. The group stood in the same garden as the wedding with a woman who might be Kate's dour-faced mother and another woman Eleanor couldn't name. There was Jane in the same hat, but her expression was serious. Grandfather David stood in the back frowning. She scanned the photograph for anyone who looked like her. Seated in the front was Kate with her hair tamed and pulled back. She looked fragile and young. Where was Andros? Was he taking the picture or gone from Kate's life again? One word was written on the back of the photograph. *Athena*. Eleanor stared at her birth name placed there in her mother's hand. No fond epigraph. Just her name.

Eleanor held the two photographs side by side and then tucked them under the ribbon tying the journal. She placed the lid on the box. She moved to the telephone and placed the long-distance call as she stared out at the backyard in the dark. "Hello, Andros. It's Eleanor." "Please don't call me that." She blinked away a film that had obscured the yard for a moment. "I have a few questions. When could we meet?"

