

## Chapter One

**O**n the east side of San Francisco's Twin Peaks, an electric trolley exited from a two-mile long tunnel onto Market Street, dragging sparks from the overhead wires. Anne Klausen disembarked and crossed three lanes of traffic against the light. A spanking new '41 Hudson yelped and smoked to a halt. Its horn tooted as the driver hurled dissents out the window. A stack of civilians on the far sidewalk yelled at the young woman to go back. With eyes fixed to the ground, Anne didn't hear the demands as she mumbled out a stream of chatter to the white line underfoot.

“On the bottom end of the food chain, huh? I'll show him. Who does he think he is? Well, I'll tell you who he is. He's a big ugly Kraut with bad breath and sunspots, that's who he is,” and she reached the other side of Market and jaywalked across Castro Street.

More beeps. More warnings.

“Why, he's nothing more than a booze hounding, whore mongering slimeball.”

She approached a nearby Art Deco building where neon letters read: THE CASTRO. Arched windows, interlocking clay pantiles, and green and blue sconces conveyed a Hollywood-like elegance. The marquee heralded the feature attraction, *The*

*Maltese Falcon.* However, the images of Humphrey Bogart and Mary Astor did little to quash the gnashing inside her head.

Anne plodded into the lobby and passed a pair of high-back purple velvet chairs under a grand chandelier, feeling insignificant. She hurried through the concession line and ordered treats from a cashier, saying, “Just because a father sermonizes atop a bar stool, doesn’t make him more meaningful. Hell, it doesn’t even make him necessary, right?”

“Okay,” the young employee said.

Anne left puzzled glimpses behind and strutted up a carpeted staircase, ranting to the image that followed her from the floor-to-ceiling mirrors. She reached the loges and flopped into a cushioned seat and started to tilt a box of popcorn toward her mouth when a pain cried out. With a groan she unlaced her saddle shoes and eased them aside. Beneath her bobby sox, arthritic toes struggled to straighten. While massaging her abused feet, her vision wandered along an aimless path of walled murals. Decorative vases and pots displayed painted figurines, which portrayed different members of ancient court life. A retinue of concubines, erotic dancers and female serfs attended a king who sat upon his throne.

Need to shake things up, she thought. It’s time women took their rightful place. Let the men do the indentured-servant thing for a while. Do them some good. At that moment a sharp discomfort began to rise from her gallbladder, conspiring with the ache in her head and feet. While the blitheness and tautness of her frame befitted her teenage status, a decade of ballet had taken its toll.

“He’d love to see me now,” she said with a huff and threw the empty popcorn box to the floor and snatched a black rope of licorice from its container. Slumped further back into her seat, she bit into the sweet, waiting for the aromatic chew to flatten the edges of her frantic mind. A few minutes later, music catapulted from speakers as if to assist her efforts. Maroon drapes separated. The houselights dimmed as human profiles stepped across the silver screen.

Sam Spade whirled his lover around and said in heated passion, “I don’t care who loves who. I won’t play the sap for you anymore.”

“I’ve been bad,” his beloved answered. “Worse than you can know.”

“You tell him, girl,” Anne called out.

Hearty “shhs” sounded from all sides. She thought about returning her own salutation and turned halfway around to do so but realized that these strangers were not the cause of her gloom. Hopeful for a quick elixir, Anne returned her gaze forward, but not even the premier of John Houston’s film could erase the snapshot of a nagging father. Without explanation, Bogie whined to a stop. A glare showed itself like an uninvited guest. Owning a triple chin, a Hitchcock-looking fellow manned the stage and held up his hands to solicit quiet.

“Ladies and gentlemen, may I have your attention, please.”

Irritation laced the audience’s murmur. Heads skittered here and there.

“By order of Lieutenant General John L. Wright, head of the Western Command, all citizens are to return to their homes this instant.”

Questions shot back, but the dour man provided few answers, offering refunds as a poor substitute. He sauntered off and left the task of herding out the throng to his subordinates.

Outside, the drone of sirens roller-coasted across the city. Merchants hung “Closed” signs and lowered chain-link gates over storefronts, not with the lazy touch of a day’s end but with the frantic stroke of an emergency. Cars scurried from parking spaces. Pedestrians’ puzzled expressions, twin to Anne’s, passed her in the opposite direction. Older folks darted one-way and then another while mothers herded their young indoors.

Anne sprinted down Eighteenth. At the corner of Sanchez, she turned right, away from her Mission High School, and raced

alongside a streetcar through Dolores Park. A young boy, pressed against the transport's window, followed her with his empty cast.

She arrived two blocks later at the foot of Liberty Street. Air escaped in quick spurts as she gaped at the escarpment. Resolute, Anne tackled the hill when from behind she heard the skidding and clashing of automobiles. Her vision remained steadfast upon the climb, ignoring the angry voices from below. The peak of Dolores Heights and a tired bungalow soon came into view. She leapfrogged the rickety porch steps to the entrance where her key fumbled within her twitching hand. Damn. She found the lock, flung open the door and sprinted inside and flipped on the radio. The gargled hum of cold vacuum tubes amped up her anxiety. Come on. Come on. Her shoe drummed against the oval carpet until a minute later a familiar voice poured into the living room.

“At eight A.M. on this day of December seventh, nineteen hundred and forty-one, a date which will live in infamy, the United States government was suddenly and deliberately attacked by Japan.” Franklin Delano Roosevelt further detailed the bombing of Pearl Harbor as well as the duplicitous actions of the Japanese ambassador, Kichisaburo Nomura, and Emperor Hirohito himself. In conclusion the President said, “With congressional approval, I do hereby declare war on the Empire of Japan and all her allies.”

Anne's thoughts sank under the Philco's chatter. She feared that all that had been would be no more. Past innocence sprang forth: ice-skating at Winterland; potato-sack racing at the Fun House; swimming at Sutro Baths. Other images of things to come flashed before her as well: the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo; the San Francisco Opera. All lost. She made her way to the kitchen and plucked the telephone from its cradle. The receiver quaked within her grasp as she dialed a memorized number. A

broken beep greeted her. Damn. She crumpled to the linoleum floor and stared at the phone swaying by its cord.

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Platinum blonde was this month's hair color while cherry-red decorated her lips. Rose McNally fondled the microphone, flashed a leg from the slit of her sequined dress and said, "Howdy, boys. How's God treatin' ya this fine afternoon?"

Her trademark greeting seemed fitting for a Sunday. In fact many were of the opinion that the striptease artist had a special covenant with the Man upstairs. The way she put it, "God works harder for sinners." There was enough unemployment going around, what with the New Deal faltering and all. No reason to put the Lord out of a job as well. The burlesque owner would do her best to keep Him busy.

"In honor of the fiftieth anniversary of those no-good lowlifes who call themselves the Republican Grays, I give you the Music Box Dancers."

A line of young damsels bounced from behind a curtain and high-kicked to the saucy tune of the "Can-Can" from a vinyl 78. With the fall and rise of petticoats, Grays whistled and yelled encouragement.

Rose retreated from the podium and sat atop Elmer Klausen's lap, stroking the sergeant's flabby arm. Plenty of flesh hung from other parts of his frame as well, which contributed to his general lack of form. He owned an East European bust with puffy cheeks, bushy eyebrows and a honker of a nose that served as a perch for his wire-rimmed moon glasses. For a final affront, a chain of sunspots claimed the space atop his balding head.

"Wanna come by later for a meal?" Rose said.

"Can't," Elmer said, raising his voice over the music. "Gotta talk some sense into that child of mine. Seems she's serious 'bout this ballet thing."

Unable to decipher every word, she leaned into him and said, "Bring her over to the club. I'll throw something together for everyone."

“Uh, don’t think that’s gonna work.”

“What?” Rose bent closer, the RCA trying to override the sound of some crisis forming outside.

“Let’s keep it simple.”

“By *simple* you mean keep this...whatever this is between you and me... behind closed doors. Have I got that right?”

“Can’t hear,” and he cupped an ear with his hand.

Her fingers fell from him and she caught up her dress to rise. Before she could get to her feet, however, a phalanx of California National Guardsmen stormed in and she reseated herself.

A baby-face officer yanked a cord from its socket to silence the music. Frilly dresses froze within the folds of their owners’ grips.

“What is the meaning of this intrusion?” demanded Major Mikael Fredericks in a loud tone. Short of stature, the Republican Grays’ leader often resorted to bluster to make up for his five-foot, six-inch frame.

“Your outfit is being placed under my authority for the time being. You and your men are to rally at the south end of the Golden Gate Bridge to await further orders.”

“I’m afraid that is quite impossible,” Fredericks said, “as these charming ladies,” and he motioned with his hand to the dancers on stage, “charge by the...”

“The Japs have invaded Pearl for chrissakes.”

Grays washed down their drinks and scurried past Fredericks as he continued his protests. “But there is no refund.”

Elmer shot up and dropped Rose to the hardwood. With her undergarments resting upside down over her head, the madam struggled before calling out his name.

“Mister Klausen, you’re forty-five years old. Government don’t want ancient relics shooting at shadows from the past. Now get your decrepit buttocks back here and help a lady to her feet.”

“My *buttocks* are as good as the next man’s. No reason to apologize. Even the best of persons have ‘em,” and he left her

on the floor and pushed his way through the exit with the rest of the pack.

“Men,” she said as she flattened out the pleats in her dress, “shoulda been a lesbian.”

Outside, an argument ensued between different factions.

“Colonel,” Baby-Face said to Fredericks, “your men will switch out those copy-cat West Point uniforms for that of the California State Military Reserve as soon as such becomes available.”

“I’m afraid you are under some sort of miscomprehension.”

“Excuse me?”

“It’s *Major* Fredericks, thank you very much.”

“Hard to believe,” the Guardsman said before making his way back to the motorcade.

Even though the roar of the seven-ton cargo trucks swallowed up his ranting, Fredericks challenged Baby-Face’s authority. “And what distinction would you be in possession of regarding real soldiering?”

The motorcade began to roll down Polk Strasse. Its rumble faded to nothing as it turned onto O’Farrell and headed west.

Fredericks corralled the disbelief of his boys, saying, “That misguided soul was somebody’s wet dream when we were clearing the Barbary Coast of degenerates and undesirables back in fifteen.”

All voiced their agreement. They were left with the dirty work in prepping the city for the World Exposition, rousting the charlatans from Pacific and Broadway streets, escorting pimps, prostitutes, gamblers and junkies aboard ferries to wallow across the bay in the broken down city of Oakland.

“And let us not forget those of us who did battle in World War I and later in the thirties while garrisoning the docks from...”

Rose stood in the entranceway and listened to Fredericks rally his troops. She turned around to her girls and said, “Better grab some shuteye. Looks like we’re gonna be busy.”

The ladies twirled boas in giddy laughter as if nothing could be better than a good war. God bless the sinner.

## Chapter Two

**T**hree chevron stripes decorated Elmer Klausen's right shoulder while stitched upon the other was a golden bear. The lanky vet lumbered from a tollbooth toward a knot of militiamen. In full-length wool overcoats, the soldiers clicked up their heels to attention.

One, a young buck of a Republican Gray, raised a stiff hand to his forehead but Sergeant Klausen was quick to correct, saying, "I'm no officer, son. Now put away that salute."

The kid forced the gesture to his side, ready to answer with a "sir" but guessed that such would be rebuffed as well and stood edgy with the unknowing of what to do next.

"Relax," the old man said as he put a hand on the boy's rifle to steady him. "Let's take a peek at that hardware of yours."

The unit presented their Springfields for the morning inspection. The sergeant examined each in turn, checking the bolt action before putting an eye down the barrel.

"Remember, men," he said in a mentor's voice, "never shoot from the same spot twice." He reminded the recruits how the white smoke of these ancient weapons betrayed a warrior's position. Klausen swerved into politics, admonishing the National Guard for not furnishing them with the more modern M-1 gas-operated rifles. Without further delay, he posted half a dozen Grays at the north and south ends of the Golden Gate Bridge alongside six-inch cannons.



“Private Ponti,” the sergeant said, “you’ll assist the Guard at the inspection depot.”

“I don’t think I gonna like this duty,” the Italian said with an accent.

“Wasn’t meant to be a popularity contest.”

“*Mamma mia*, you got something right there,” and added in a kidding voice, “*Sir*.”

Elmer Klausen shot his childhood friend a playful smile, saying, “Don’t start.”

The pair had terrorized North Beach and the Mission District together during their younger years. They stood in marked contrast to one another. Elmer was a good six inches taller and at least seventy pounds heavier, but Tony was the more outgoing, often paving a smooth path to the girls with his slick Sicilian charm.

A sedan rolled to a stop at the roadblock. With mirror in hand, Private Ponti scanned the undercarriage. A Guardsman approached to verify that the driver was Oriental and reminded the Gray to search the engine compartment as well.

“Sonny, I know you no want get hands dirty. So back off, *capisce?*”

“Get to it,” the Guardsman said as he pointed with his weapon to the hood of the car.

Frustrated civilians maneuvered a one-eighty and returned the way they came. Taillights sparkled from the span like columns of red candles in a Chinese parade.

Tendrils of fog moved through Sergeant Klausen’s bones. Whips of air snapped at him. He pinched up his collar and started toward the warmth of indoors when a raspy bellow pierced the day from the seaward side. He peered through his binoculars and then picked a walkie-talkie from amongst the lint of his front pocket.

“U.S.S. *Lexington* inbound, a quarter mile west. Over.”

“Copy that,” responded a captain from a naval trawler below. “Sighting confirmed. We’ll take it from here. Over and out.”

The vessel motored in a wide arc from the bridge's mid-point to the San Francisco shoreline, dragging a steel net and its 25-ton anchor toward the winch house. Searchlights poured upon the scene from nearby Fort Point. Completed in 1861 to protect the federal government's gold supply from Confederates, the citadel was recalled into service to oversee the operation of the newly installed anti-submarine barrier.

A quartet of tugs arrived to guide the aircraft carrier through the narrow channel to the Hunters Point Shipyard. Satisfied all was well, Sergeant Elmer Klausen wheeled around to his earlier intent when he bumped into the hooded frame of another. His weapon jerked up.

The girl guided the gun to the side, saying, "Put that thing away before you hurt somebody."

"Could've warned me with a 'hello' or somethin'," Elmer said to his daughter.

"Quit your fussing."

"If we could bottle that sarcasm of yours and drop it on the Japs, this war'd be over by daybreak."

"Here, brought you coffee, plenty of sugar," and Anne handed a thermos to him.

A cliché entered the father's mind, swirling around a cloudy theme of sweetness and disposition, but the numbness in his cheeks reset his priorities and he wrapped his ropey hands around the mug. "A few of the boys are bivouacked down in the old money room, down the concrete tunnel below the toll plaza," he said. "Why don't ya see if anyone needs some of this goop ya call coffee? We'll meet up after my shift, ride home together."

"What if I want to leave now?"

"Could kill your mother for dyin' so young. Now get."

The wind's bite sharpened with the departure of his child's insolent tongue. She walked away in a haughty posture, her chin turned upward.

Words pushed through his walkie-talkie. Distracted, the sergeant couldn't comprehend the message. "Repeat. Over."

"Net remains open. *Bunting* outbound. Over."

“Ten-four. Out.” Klausen returned the radio to his pocket and lifted his glasses. The seventy-foot minesweeper came into focus. He combed the surrounding area. No unauthorized crafts showed themselves, all safe. Nearby, a collection of Grays milled around a drum’s fire. The sergeant strolled over and rubbed his palms over the flame.

“Nicola and the girls, everyone good?” Klausen asked Tony Ponti.

“Five daughters,” and he shook his head. “You think one boy roll out, but no. What are odds to this?” He finished off with another *mamma mia* before asking, “How your little Annie?”

“Not so little anymore, ‘cept between the ears. Wants to run off to L.A. and dance with the stars. Go figure.”

“Not one of my girls permitted out of house until thirty,” Tony said with a smile, a smile he had owned forever.

“Extinguish that beacon,” ordered an authoritative voice from behind, “unless you are of the intent to escort the Japanese to a front row seat?”

“It colder than my Aunt Marcella’s bottom,” retorted Ponti. “‘Sides, no enemy here for week or two.”

“Private, did you not grasp the order?” Fredericks said as he stepped into the light.

“*Sí, Sí*, I grasp plenty.” He suffocated the blaze with the recapping of the drum’s lid and dispersed to his post.

Klausen did not appreciate Fredericks’s interference. It was a minor incident, which he felt capable of handling on his own.

“Perhaps you’re of the opinion that I was too onerous with the man?” Fredericks said.

“Maybe.”

“Maybe you possess a predilection for Ponti. Perhaps that would be the only *maybe* in this affair,” Fredericks insisted. “*Maybe* you are two of a...”

“Just friends from the old days is all.”

“If you say so.” Fredericks sauntered away leaving no space for rebuttal.

Scattered thoughts careened off each other like bumper cars. Elmer took his vexation across the lanes, dodging traffic. His frown fell over the railing to the churning water below, his mind ebbing with the Potato Patch, a mile section of hellish water that spilled off the San Andreas Fault. He raised his binocs and gathered in the *Bunting*, its bow splitting the stubborn confluence of Pacific Ocean and Sacramento River. The civilian ship powered toward the northern tip of the Marin Headlands where twenty or so mysterious metal canisters rolled about. Then an angular shape, stitched on the front edge of a fog bank, materialized. The torpedo boat bobbed in and out of the rolling mist. Klausen's fingers rolled over a knob, reeling in his fear. Figures dashed from one lens to the other, limbs swayed puppet-like before him. He grabbed his radio.

“Ensign, *Bunting* on collision course. Over.”

“Say again. Over.”

Jesus, Son of Joseph.

The sound of distant horns told him he was too late. The jagged discord of twisting steel competed with the piercing of mechanical alarms. Screams were lost on the wind.

Drivers and passengers scrambled from cars and rushed forward. The sergeant motioned for a group of nearby Grays. They intercepted the block of civilians, urging everyone to return to their vehicles. Curiosity won over, however, and they pushed through, thirsty for a first-hand view of the war.

A silver-haired woman, with a flower printed bandana around her head, sighted the tangled wreck and gasped, “Oh, my goodness.”

Fredericks marched over and took charge. “Lady, you must remove yourself.”

“I never thought this day would come. Isn't it terrible?”

“The elucidation of *terrible* would be that semblance wrapped inside your scarf. Now move along.”

“Well, I never.”

The Gray's commander turned to Klausen and said in a condescending way, "I hate to inconvenience you, sergeant, but kindly tend to your duties and extract these people from the area."

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The Chevy's hooded headlights strained to show the path through the Presidio where streetlamps now rested dead. A full moon's incandescence aided their journey, washing over a grove of eucalyptus trees, a row of barracks and a trio of aluminum hangars. Father and daughter passed cavalry stables and Crissy Airfield where the boys of Battery E tented themselves on a rare speck of available space. Nearby, a squadron of bulldozers shoveled a beach into the box-beds of dump trucks. Further down Pershing Boulevard, sandbags sealed the bays of administrative buildings to entomb the structures for the duration of the war.

They soon came to a turnstile at the east exit. Elmer adjusted his rearview mirror to study a Guardsman stepping the length of his '39 Chevy. The young soldier's hand brushed alongside a pair of suicide doors until coming to the driver's window. He tapped on the glass with a pair of knuckles.

"I.D."

"Pretty nifty, huh?" Klausen said. The 4-door Master Deluxe cost him every penny he owned at the time, over seven hundred dollars. He pampered the dark-blue sedan with a weekly wash and wax, causing his daughter to wonder which was his favorite girl.

The private examined the old man's license and then noticed the uniform. "Didn't know you Grays were allowed to roam the countryside willy-nilly during time of war."

"War? There's a war goin' on?" Elmer said before turning sideways. "Can you imagine that, daughter?"

The sentry handed back the wallet. "Get a move on."

A shitty grin sliced across Klausen as he cruised onto Lombard Street. Reflectors from the four-lane boulevard popped up like runway lights. At Fillmore Street they took a right. The

Marina District disappeared behind them as they crawled south through Cow Hollow. Restaurants, taverns and inns stood empty. A few solitary stragglers peered up and down the block with their befuddlement.

The eight-cylinder growled as it climbed Pacific Heights. The rock and brick mansions of the city's wealthiest clung to the hillside. Blackout shades, drawn behind leaded windows, hid any signs of life. Shadows of Edwardians, Victorians and Mission Revivals melded with the night as clouds roamed past the moon.

Anne fell silent as if the pervasive stillness had put a spell on her. Even the stone-cold structures seemed to be mourning the day's events. The *Bunting* catastrophe had announced that the unknown was here. The quiet agreed, seeping through the avenues, sucking the lifeblood out of her San Francisco. So full of vim just a few days previous, citizens referred to their beloved home simply as the "City". No other urban area deserved such notoriety, but this scene before her stood as a stranger.

The Chevy lumbered down the south side of Pacific Heights and across Pine Street to the flat that contained Japantown. A sign lulled past announcing Zone 22. Zone 22? As if the district contained such abhorrence, such inflamed disgust, that its mere utterance might transmit an unfathomable contagion.

The military had taken up positions at every other avenue. Guard shacks and rifle-toting MPs blanketed the area. How did things get to such a point? Anne pondered. One day you're watching Bogie spin his magic, the next you're in the middle of brimstone and damnation. The martial law atmosphere, however, inferred something different upon her father.

"Gonna continue with that ballet instructor of yours?" Elmer said, breaking the dead silence between them.

Entangled within the unfamiliarity around her, she didn't hear her father's question and asked that he repeat it.

"Merichino Scitzo or whatever his name is."

"Merishio Ito," corrected Anne. "And, yes, I intend to continue."

"He's a Jap, ya know. Works down in Japantown."

“You’ve been paying for my dance lessons these past ten years. I would like to believe that you know where his studio is.”

“Should’ve sent your fanny to boarding school instead. Teach ya some manners, dial down that attitude of yours.”

“At least Mr. Ito doesn’t hide behind the pretense of being someone he is not.”

“Don’t use that tone with me,” he said, knowing full well the intent behind her jab. He released the tension from the steering wheel. “No need goin’ ’round askin’ for trouble. Until the war is over, we’re Dutch, not Deutsch, got it?”

“Whatever you...”

“Those were tough times back in seventeen,” he interrupted, “when President Wilson organized the Enemy Alien Registration Section. Some twenty-three-year-old snot named J. Edgar Hoover interrogated thousands of Germans, sent many to prison. What hurt most was the humiliation your mother and I suffered at the hands of neighbors and so called ‘friends’. Decided to make a shift in the family name, added an ‘n’ to *Klause*.”

“Moving around the alphabet doesn’t change who you are.”

No response.

“I don’t see any of your militia buddies altering their identities,” she persisted.

“That’s ’cause they’re fools.”

“*Afraid a fool will scorn the wisdom of your words?*”

“What?”

“Proverbs 23:9,” Anne said.

“Got too much religion in ya.”

“I could spare some.”

“Wouldn’t know where to put it.”

Mission High School and Dolores Park drifted behind them as they approached the foot of Liberty Street. Within closed circles the blacktop held the honor of the City’s steepest lane. The Chamber of Commerce, however, awarded this tag upon Filbert Street near Telegraph Hill where tourists of yesterday felt safer, where homes had announced themselves with greater dignity and

grace. This was fine with the Klausens as such attention might be a poor fit for them anyway.

The father down-clutched. The Chevy sputtered forward in a low grind of gears. At the top of the hill, Elmer steered the car into the driveway, pulled on the handbrake and turned off the engine. The bungalow rested between homes of chipped paint and haggard rows of shrubs. The neighborhood once stood as a monument of things to come, of suburbia to be, a short buggy ride to last century's financial district. Now it was nothing more than a tattered picture of its former self, forgotten.

Cypress trees hid many of the homes from view, pushing them deeper into the night. Not a glimmer shown anywhere with the exception of one. 425 lit up like a Fourth of July sale at Macy's. Talk was not necessary. The father's rigid demeanor alerted his daughter.

"It was before sunrise when I left to bring you a snack," Anne offered as an excuse. "You do remember the snack, don't you, daddy dearest?"

"Gotta get your head out of the clouds and quit prancin' around in swan costumes, doin' the hoochie coochie. There are more important things," he said as he exited the sedan.

"Excuse me," interrupted a voice from the curb.

Elmer turned around and glowered at the sudden appearance of the neighborhood reject. Dressed in khaki with a shock of frizzled hair squirting out from under a white helmet, he looked more like a deranged zookeeper than a Block Warden.

"Hello, Curly."

"It's Sean, Sean McGinnis," the young man said with demand in his voice.

Klausen, hearing a suggestion of disrespect, said in slow fashion, "C-u-r-l-y, whaddya want?"

The boy threw out his chest in protest and stuck to business. "You're in violation of ordinance three dash fifteen of the Civil Defense Code, which states, and I quote: 'Until further notification private and commercial residences are hereby required to obey all blackout procedures including the use of...'"



“Go piss on someone else’s yard. I’ve had a long day,” and the old man showed his back to the irritant and lumbered over the crabgrass to the porch.

“Better knock some sense into him,” the Block Warden said to Anne after her dad had disappeared inside.

“He never made any sense before, why should he now?”

Her mouth turned upward as if to say that such effort would be wasted, but Curly interpreted it as something else, as a smile meant for him. Very interesting, he thought, and responded with a grin of his own.