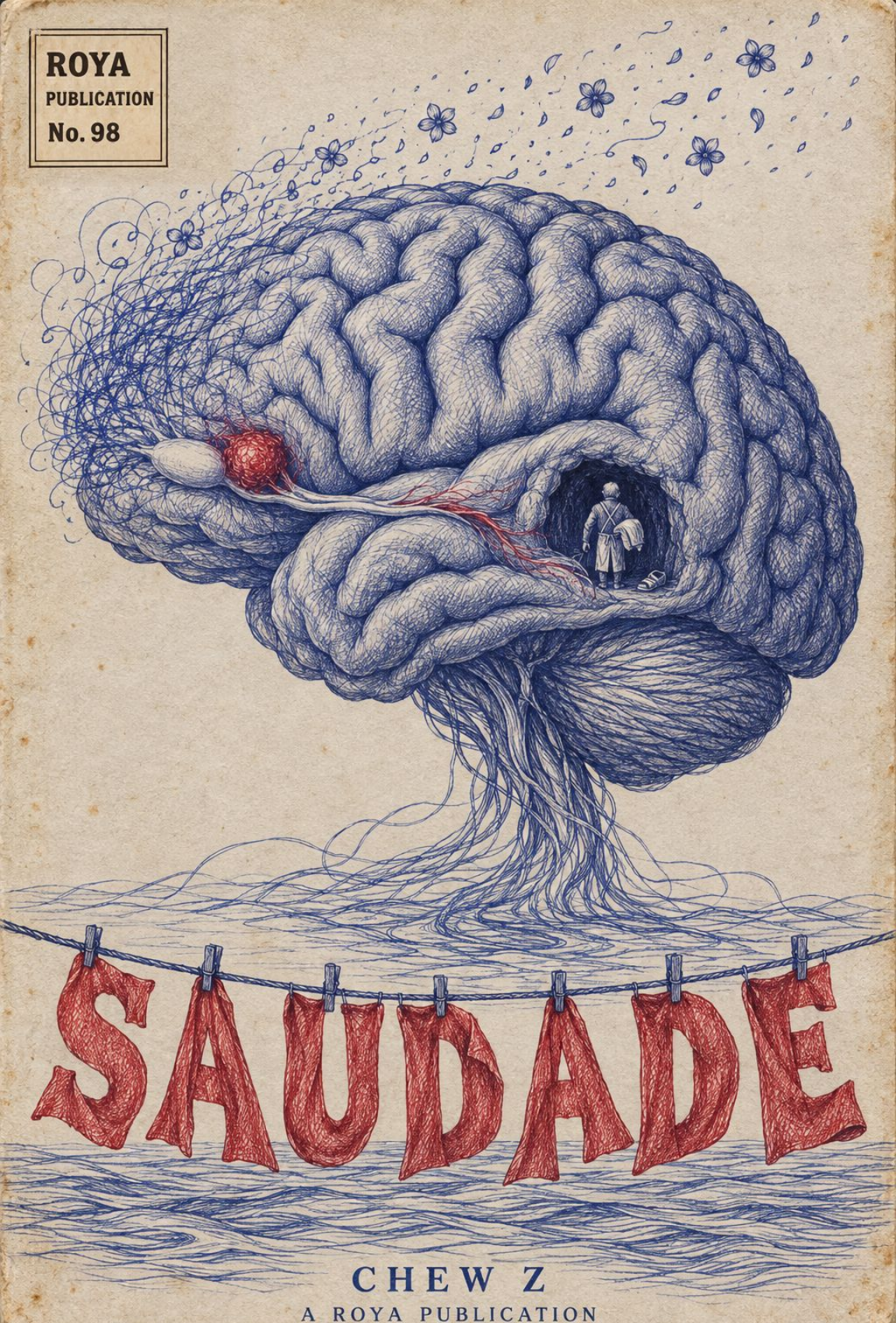


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CHEW Z

A ROYA PUBLICATION

SAUDADE

CHEW Z

Printed in the Reach

Roya Publication No. 98

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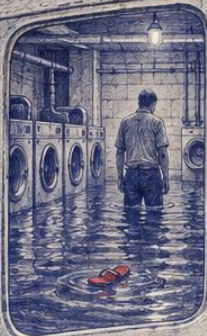
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SOAK



WASH



RINSE



SPIN



FOLD



SYNOPSIS

For nineteen years Vasco Pell has worked the night laundry in the basement of the Hotel Estrela, a grand old hotel sliding slowly downhill above the Lisbon docks. He is sixty-one, vain, funny at funerals, and cursed with a nose that reads every guest's night off their sheets: who was afraid, who was loved, who lied in their sleep.

The river took his son twenty years ago. Three years ago it took his wife. He keeps her last pillowcase sealed in a drawer and opens it once a year, on her birthday, to breathe in what is left. He keeps other things too, behind the boilers, that nobody knows about.

On the night of her birthday, a bag of sheets comes down the chute from Room 613, and it smells of the fear he smelled on his wife every day of her last years. The room has been shut for three years. The night porter, an old man who keeps every key in the building, looks at him for a long time and tells him to go home.

He does not go home. On the sixth floor the door of 613 is open, and a woman is sitting in the chair by the window, facing the river. She knows his name. She will not laugh at his jokes. And every night, after she tells him a story about Lisbon, she asks him one small question he cannot answer.

The questions are getting closer to the river.

A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

Saudade [sow-DAA-d] is the Portuguese word for loving someone in the shape of the space they left. This is a book about that, and about the one part of us that will not let the space close over: the body, which keeps what the mind has talked itself out of.

The Hotel Estrela and the people in it are invented. Almost everything around them is not. Scientists really have collected the sweat of first-time skydivers and watched strangers' brains raise the alarm when they smelled it. Couples who share a bed for years really do come to share the tiny living things on their skin. Seizures that begin with a smell that is not there are real, and so is the price of the operation that ends them in Vasco's case.

The Lisbon in these pages is as true as I could make it, down to the basil you must never sniff. The story of the custard tarts and the monks' laundry is told the way Lisboaetas tell it; nobody knows if it is true.

The six interludes retell old Portuguese legends and history in my own words. The short folk verses in them are my own, written in the old Portuguese four-line form and given here in English. The one exception is the verse by Luís de Camões that closes the story of Inês de Castro, published in 1572, which appears here in my own English translation.

Vasco tells jokes so that nobody will look at him. I have known men like that. I have been one. This book is for anyone who has told the story of their worst day so often that they forgot there was ever another version.

Chew Z

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THE WASHERWOMEN OF CANEÇAS

Caneças [ka-NAY-sash] is a village on the hills just north of Lisbon, known for the cold, clean water of its springs. For generations, until the washing machine came, the women of Caneças and the villages around it washed the city's laundry. They were called lavadeiras [la-va-DAY-rash], which simply means "washerwomen."

Every week the lavadeiras came down into Lisbon, first with donkeys and carts and later on the backs of trucks. They climbed the stairs of the city's houses, knocked at kitchen doors, and carried away the dirty linen in great bundles knotted up inside a sheet. At home they beat it on the stones of the streams, rinsed it in spring water, and spread it over the grass and the hedges to dry white in the sun. At the end of the week they brought it back, folded and sweet. At the end of the month they were paid.

A washerwoman handled everything a family did not show its guests. The wine on the tablecloth after the argument. The blood on the sheet after the birth, and after the birth that did not come. The fever sweat. The pillowcase of the husband who came home at four in the morning. She knew which houses had money and which only pretended, who was ill, who was grieving, and who slept alone in a bed made for two. It was said in the villages that a good lavadeira could read a family's whole year in its washing.

It was also said that a good lavadeira never told. That was the first rule of the trade, older than soap: *what the cloth tells you, the water keeps*. When a daughter asked her mother why, she was told that the river does not repeat what it hears, and neither do we.

Some nights, in the city, the women had nowhere to sleep but on the bundles they had come to collect. They lay down on strangers' sheets and slept on strangers' secrets. In the morning they carried them home and washed them clean.

I washed the clothes in the river,
I washed them and did not ask;
whatever the sheet told me
I carry with me to the sea.

*The women of Caneças are gone. The rule is not. Somebody
always has to wash what a family cannot say.*

I. SOAK

1. I have smelled every sin in the Bible, and three that the Bible was too embarrassed to write down.

I used to say that at parties. I have not been to a party in twenty years, so now I say it to the machines.

The machines live in the basement of the Hotel Estrela [esh-TRAY-la]. *Estrela* means *star*, which is the first joke in the building and not the last. I have worked among them every night since 2005: five washers as big as wardrobes, three dryers, a steam press as long as a coffin, and a chute in the ceiling through which the hotel sends me, every night, what it has done with itself.

The Estrela stands above the docks of Cais do Sodré [KAISH doo so-DREH], the old riverside quarter where sailors used to come ashore with a month's wages and leave with none. It was a grand hotel once. For sixty years it has been going downhill at the speed of a tram, and it has still not arrived at the bottom. The carpets remember better days. The lift remembers nothing and has to be persuaded.

Nobody sees me. That is the whole point of a night laundryman. The day staff believe the linen cleans itself, the way children believe the fridge fills itself. The guests believe nothing at all about me, because they do not know I exist, which is the only kind of privacy they have left, and they do not have it.

I am sixty-one years old. I have a face like a shop with its shutters down and a nose that God gave me by mistake. I think it was meant for a dog, or a saint, and I was standing in the wrong queue. I can smell rain on the far side of the river before it crosses. I can smell a lie on a man's collar. I can stand at the top of the basement stairs and tell you which of the washers is running hot.

And I can read a sheet the way a priest reads a face.

Sheets are the only honest witnesses in this city. You cannot bribe them and you cannot frighten them. You can only bleach them, and that is my job.

If you walk through Alfama [al-FAA-ma], Lisbon's oldest quarter, which clings to its hill the way a barnacle clings to a hull, you will see washing hung out of every window. It is strung across alleys so narrow that two neighbours can pass a coffee from one balcony to

the other. The people who live there say the laundry is the city's real flag. They are right. Every line is a family's confession, flapping in public. Everyone walks under it and nobody looks up.

I look up. That is my trouble.

2. Let me tell you what a hotel smells like at two in the morning, when the chute starts to speak.

Fear smells sharp, like a coin held in the mouth, with something underneath it like a cut onion. Wanting smells of warm bread and salt. Confidence smells like new shoes. Comfort smells like milk. Loneliness smells like a double bed slept in on one side only, which is not a smell exactly but I promise you it is there. Shame is sour and hides in the pillowcase. Love is harder to describe. It is the smell of a room after somebody has left it laughing.

Grief has no smell at all. I have looked for it for twenty years.

I know how this sounds. I sound like a man who sells crystals at the flea market. But I read once, in a dentist's waiting room, about scientists who collected the sweat of people jumping out of an aeroplane for the first time. They had strangers smell it while a machine photographed their brains. The part of the brain that raises the alarm lit up. The strangers had breathed in somebody else's terror and caught it, the way you catch a cold. I tore the page out of the magazine and put it in my wallet. It was the first time anyone had agreed with me.

So. Two o'clock, and the hotel confesses.

Room 311 is a businessman from Porto who believes, every Tuesday, that he is having a heart attack. His sheets go fear, then relief, then shame, always in that order, like a meal. Room 208 is two Englishwomen who tell the desk they are sisters. They are not sisters. Theirs are the happiest sheets in the building, and I wash them last, as a treat. Room 517 is a man who cries in his sleep and tips the maid double. I have never seen him. I would know him anywhere.

The honeymoon suite is always the same. The bride is afraid and the groom is confident. That is the wrong way round for a happy marriage and the right way round for a long one.

I do not judge them. I am not a priest. I am a man with a trolley. I read, I wash, I fold, and in the morning the city puts on clean linen and pretends it slept well.

3. At three o'clock I go up to the front desk, because at three o'clock the night porter pours the cherry liqueur.

A night porter is the man who keeps a hotel while it sleeps. He lets in the guests who come back late and the ones who come back wrong. He carries the bags, answers the bell at four in the morning, and holds the keys to every room in the building. In Portuguese he is the *porteiro da noite* [poor-TAY-roo da NOY-t], the porter of the night, which sounds like a job in a fairy tale. It is.

Ours has kept the front desk of the Estrela since 1994. He is old and slow and soft-spoken. He has the patience of a man who has watched a great many people check out, in both senses. I call him São Pedro [sow PAY-droo], Saint Peter, because Saint Peter holds the keys to the gates of Heaven. He has stopped pretending to find this funny. That is our arrangement. I make the joke, he declines it, and the hotel carries on.

He keeps a small radio on the counter, turned very low, and it plays fado [FAA-doo] all night. Fado is Lisbon's own music: one voice and two guitars, singing about the sea and about people who did not come back from it. The word means *fate*. The radio is so quiet that you do not hear the song. You hear the shape of someone being sad in another room.

Ginjinha [zheen-ZHEE-nya] is a liqueur made from sour cherries, dark and sweet, and in the old city it is sold at tiny bars where you stand up to drink it from a cup the size of a thimble. São Pedro keeps a bottle under the desk and two chocolate cups, which you eat afterwards. It is the most civilised thing in Portugal.

"Well?" he said. It was the last Wednesday in November, and he said it every night.

"Three-eleven had his heart attack. The sisters are still sisters. Five-seventeen is crying about someone called Marta [MAAR-ta]."

"You don't know it's Marta."

"It is Marta. It is always Marta."

He poured. We drank. On the radio a woman sang that the sea had kept something of hers, and the guitars agreed.

"You look grey," he said.

"I am sixty-one. Grey is the colour they issue."

"You were on the stairs again on Tuesday."

"I was not on the stairs on Tuesday."

He looked at me over the cup the way he looks at a guest who says the minibar was already empty. Then he let it go, because he is a porter, and a porter's whole art is knowing which doors to leave shut.

I went back down with the taste of cherries in my mouth, and the stairs did not remind me of anything at all.

4. Behind the boilers there is a wire cage where the hotel puts linen it has given up on: torn sheets, stained towels, tablecloths from weddings nobody remembers. It is supposed to be emptied every spring. It is not, because I keep the key.

In nineteen years, six guests have died in the Hotel Estrela.

That is not many, for a building that size, over that long. People come to hotels to do the things they cannot do at home, and one of those things, now and then, is stop. When it happens, the room is closed, the men from the council come and go quietly by the service lift, and the sheets are sent down to me to be burned.

I do not burn them. I fold them, unwashed, and seal each set in a bag, and write the room and the year on it in marker pen, and put it in the cage.

Room 403, 2009: a German cyclist, forty, heart. His sheets smelled of wind and bananas and absolutely no fear at all. He did not know it was coming. I envy him that more than I can say.

Room 116, 2013: an old man who told the desk he had come to see the river one more time. His sheets smelled of the river. I do not know how.

Room 520, 2017: a woman who had ordered champagne, and drunk one glass of it.

There are three more. I know them all by heart.

On my break, at four, when the machines are all turning and there is nothing to do but wait, I go into the cage and lie down on them. I lie on the German's sheet and the old man's pillow and the champagne woman's blanket, and I keep them company.

I know how this sounds. I have said it to myself in the voice of a newspaper, and it sounds worse. *Hotel worker kept dead guests' bedding.* But nobody ever came for those sheets. No family ever wrote and asked. The dead are the only guests who never check out, and somebody ought to sit with them, and I am the only one awake.

Besides, they are quiet. They do not ask me what happened on the beach.

5. At seven I clock out and walk home through a city that is just putting its face on.

Lisbon's pavements are not paved. They are made by hand from little cubes of black and white stone, set one by one by craftsmen called *calceteiros* [kal-se-TAY-roosh], in waves and stars and ships. The pavement is called the *calçada* [kal-SAA-da]. It is the most beautiful ground in Europe, and in the rain it is as slippery as a lie. Tourists go down on it like skittles. Lisboetas [leezh-BWAY-tash], the people of Lisbon, walk on it with small, careful, flat-footed steps, and you can tell a local from a visitor at a hundred metres by the way they fear the floor.

I take the tram up the hill to Graça [GRAA-sa], because at sixty-one I have earned the tram. It is a yellow box on rails, older than me and louder, and it climbs streets that no bus would try. At the top I have a flat on the fourth floor with a view of other people's roofs and, if you lean out of the kitchen window far enough to frighten the neighbours, a slice of river.

There are three doors off my hallway. One is the bathroom. One is the bedroom. The third has been shut for twenty years, and I do not open it, and I do not need to, because I know exactly what is behind it: a small bed, a poster of a footballer who has since retired, a shelf of plastic dinosaurs arranged in order of how frightening they are.

The door is painted blue. My wife, Inês [ee-NAYSH], painted it. The paint has held up better than we did.

Here is what happened. I will tell it once, the way I have always told it.

On Sunday the thirteenth of June 2004, I took my son Tomás [too-MAASH] across the river on the ferry to the beach at Trafaria [tra-fa-REE-a]. He was six years old. It was very hot. I went up the beach to buy him an ice cream, and when I came back he was not there. The river had him.

That is the whole of it. I have told it to the police, to my mother, to my wife, to a priest, and to a psychologist that the council paid for, and it has never changed by a single word, which is how you know it is true.

I have not crossed the river since.

6. The twenty-eighth of November was Inês's birthday. She would have been fifty-eight.

My wife's name was Inês. She sold bread in a bakery on the Rua da Graça [ROO-a da GRAA-sa], Graça Street, for thirty-one years and came home every evening smelling of it, as if she had been baked herself. After Tomás she wore black. Older Portuguese widows do that, and mothers who have buried a child, sometimes for the rest of their lives. The custom is called *luto* [LOO-too], mourning. Inês wore it for seventeen years and I never once saw her take it off, not even in August.

In December 2021, on a grey morning, she walked to the Cais das Colunas [KAISH dash koo-LOO-nash].

The name means *the Quay of the Columns*. It is two stone pillars and a flight of marble steps that go down from the great square at the edge of the city into the river. They were built so that kings could arrive by boat. The steps do not stop where the water starts. They carry on down, under the surface, into the green, as if the city had meant to keep walking.

Inês kept walking. The river gave her back on the fourth day.

When the bed was stripped, I kept one pillowcase. I put it in a plastic bag and sealed it with the machine the café downstairs uses

for sealing coffee, which sucks all the air out, and I put the bag in the drawer beside the bed. Once a year, on her birthday, I cut it open and put my face inside and breathe.

That night, before my shift, I opened it for the third time.

Warm bread. The almond soap she bought from the chemist's in a box with a blue bird on it. Her hair. And underneath, faint but there, the thing I had smelled on her every day of her last years: the coin in the mouth, the cut onion. Fear. I never asked her what she was afraid of. I thought I knew. I thought it was the river.

There was less of her than last year. There is less every time, because every time I open the bag the air gets in and takes a little of her away. I have done the arithmetic. One birthday, not so many birthdays from now, I will cut it open and breathe in and there will be nothing there but cotton.

The Portuguese have a word for this. The whole country is built on it. The word is *saudade* [sow-DAA-d]. People will tell you it cannot be translated, which is what people always say about a word they are proud of. It can. It means loving someone in the shape of the space they left. It means missing a thing so completely that the missing becomes a kind of company.

I have saudade the way other men have a bad knee. I sealed the bag again. I went to work.

7. At twenty to three that night, standing at the press with a tablecloth from the second-floor function room, I smelled burnt sugar.

It came from nowhere. It was not in the room. It was caramel left too long in the pan, just past sweet and into bitter, and it was so strong that I put the iron down and turned round to look for the fire.

Then the laundry filled with river.

It did not pour in. It was simply there, the way the answer to a question is suddenly there: brown water, cold, up to my knees and rising, smelling of mud and something sweet and oily like sun cream. The dryers were still turning behind it. The strip light was still humming. The water moved with a slow tide in it, the way the river moves at the Cais das Colunas, and across it, turning gently on

the surface, came a child's sandal. Red, with a plastic buckle. It went past my knees and under the press and was gone.

Then dryer number three buzzed, the way it buzzes when a load is done.

The floor was dry. My trousers were dry. The tablecloth was on the press where I had left it, with the iron beside it, just beginning to scorch. That was the burnt smell, I told myself. That was all.

It was not all. It came back. It came back many times, that winter and the spring after, and I learned how it worked, because a man who spends his nights among machines learns the rules of anything that repeats. I called them the tides, because they came in and went out and left things on the floor that were not there before.

I will give you the rules now, plainly. It took me months to learn them, and there is no reason you should have to.

The first rule: *a smell takes me in*. Every tide begins with a smell that is not in the room, and every memory has its own smell, the way every lock has its own key. Orange blossom is my wedding. Sun cream and river mud is a Sunday I do not talk about. Bleach and steam is now: the laundry, the present, the only place I am safe. And burnt sugar comes first, before any of them, like a knock at the door.

The second rule: *the buzzer brings me back*. However far the tide takes me, it has always ended when one of the machines finishes its load and buzzes. I have never been so grateful to a sound.

There was a third rule. It had not arrived yet. I will tell you when it does.

8. At twenty to six the chute spoke, and a bag came down that should not have.

The hotel's laundry bags have a paper tag on the drawstring, and the chambermaids write the room number on it in pencil. This one said 613. I untied it the way I untie all of them, and the smell came up out of the neck of the bag, and I sat down on the floor.

It was the pillowcase.

Not the bread and not the soap. The thing underneath. The coin and the onion, exactly as it was in the pillowcase, but whole, and strong,

and new, the way it smelled on her in the last year when I came home at dawn and she was already awake. Somebody had slept in those sheets tonight and been as frightened as my wife.

I took the bag up to the front desk. I did not wait for anything.

"Who's in six-thirteen?"

São Pedro turned round on his stool and looked at the board behind him, where the keys hang on brass hooks, one for every room, each with a heavy brass fob so that guests do not walk off with them. The key to 613 was on its hook.

"Nobody," he said. "Six-thirteen's been shut for three years. There's damp in the ceiling."

"Somebody slept in it."

He looked at the bag in my hands. Then he looked at me, for a long time, the way you look at a man who has just asked you the time while holding a clock.

"Go home, Vasco [VAASH-koo]," he said.

He is the only person left alive who calls me by my first name.

9. I did not go home.

I do not remember climbing the stairs. I remember the sixth floor.

The corridor was dark except for the green light over the fire door, and the carpet had the flattened, patient smell of a place nobody walks. At the end, on the river side, the door of 613 stood open by the width of a hand, and there was a light behind it, the colour of a lamp through a lampshade.

I pushed the door.

It was an ordinary room: a bed, a wardrobe, a chair, a window with its curtains open onto the river and the black water and the lights of the far bank. In the chair, facing the window, sat a woman.

She was in her fifties, I thought, though the light made it hard to tell. She sat completely still, with her hands in her lap, looking out at the water, as though she had been sitting there a long time and had nowhere else to be. She smelled of the river, and of orange

blossom, and underneath both, of the thing that had come down the chute.

She did not turn round. She said, "Vasco."

Not *Senhor Pell* [se-NYOR PEL], which is *Mister Pell*, the way the hotel says it. Not *the laundry*. Vasco.

I said the first thing a man like me says when he is frightened, which is a joke. I said, "Room service."

She did not laugh.

Inês stopped laughing at my jokes in the summer of 2004. Until that moment, in that doorway, I had forgotten what it sounds like when a woman doesn't.

THE ENCHANTED MOORISH GIRLS

The Portuguese call them mouras encantadas [MOH-rash en-kan-TAA-dash], which means "the enchanted Moorish girls." The Moors were Muslim peoples from North Africa who crossed the sea in the year 711 and ruled much of what is now Portugal for centuries, and the far south for more than five hundred years. When the Christian kings finally drove them south and out, the Moors left in a hurry, and the stories say they left their treasure behind, buried under castles and at the bottom of wells. They also left some of their daughters, put under a spell to guard it.

Every village in Portugal has one. She lives in a spring, or a well, or under a bridge, or in the rock beside a river, wherever water comes up out of the dark. Most of the year she cannot be seen. But on one night, the eve of São João [sow zhoo-OW], Saint John, the twenty-third of June, close to the shortest night of the year, she comes up out of the water and sits on the stones and combs her long hair with a comb made of gold. Sometimes she sings. Sometimes she lays out her treasure beside her to dry in the moonlight, and to anyone else it looks like a heap of figs, or pebbles, or coal.

In one of the old stories a young shepherd, walking home late on São João's eve, comes to the spring below his village and finds her there, combing. She is the most beautiful thing he has ever seen. She tells him she has been waiting under the water for four hundred years, and that he can set her free. All he has to do is carry her on his back up the hill to the church door, and not look back, and not say a word, whatever he hears behind him.

He agrees. He lifts her; she weighs nothing. He starts to climb. Behind him on the path he hears his mother calling his name, then his dog crying as if it were hurt, then the sound of the whole village burning. He does not look back. He does not speak. He is three steps from the church door when he hears, very close behind him, a girl's voice he has never heard before, softly saying his name. He turns round.

There is nobody on his back. There is nobody on the path. Far below, at the spring, he hears a splash, and then a voice from under the water saying, *Now I must wait twice as long.*

People used to say that the mouras do not want gold or thanks. They want only someone who will keep going, and not look back.

Moorish girl of the enchanted spring
combs her hair by the light of the moon;
whoever carries her up the road
must never once turn round.

*Some spells are broken by a kiss. The old ones are broken by
walking on.*

II. WASH

10. She told me a story. That was how it began, and that was how it went on, every night that winter.

I stood in the doorway of 613 with a laundry bag in my hands, like a man who has come to the wrong funeral, and she did not turn round. She said, "Sit down, Vasco. You are letting the corridor in." So I sat on the end of the bed, and she told me how Lisbon was made.

"A long time ago," she said, "before there was a city here, only hills and marsh and this river, a ship came in from the sea. The man who steered it was Ulysses, the Greek, the one who spent ten years trying to get home from a war. He was lost. He was always lost. He came up the river looking for fresh water, and on the shore he found a queen."

She spoke the way the river moves at night, without any hurry, as if it had already been everywhere it meant to go.

"Her name was Ofiusa [o-fee-OO-za]. She ruled this whole country, and she was a woman from the waist up and a serpent from the waist down, and she had never loved anybody, because nobody had ever stayed long enough. She loved Ulysses. He let her. He stayed a season. He said he would build her a city here and call it by his own name. And while he was saying it, his men were filling the ship with water and bread, and one night, without a word, he sailed."

Outside the window, across the black water, a single light moved on the far bank. A car, going home.

"When she woke and found the harbour empty, she went after him. She threw herself down the valley towards the sea, and her great body twisted and heaved on the ground in her grief, and where it twisted, the earth rose up. That is why Lisbon has its hills. They are the shape of a woman thrashing after a man who did not look back."

I said, because I could not stop myself, "And he never even left a note. Typical Greek."

She did not laugh.

"People say there are seven hills," she said. "There are more. The story goes that the monk who counted them stood in a boat on the river, and there was one hill hidden behind the castle, so he left it off the list. That is Graça. That is where you live."

I had not told her where I lived.

Then she asked me her question. She did not ask it cruelly. She asked it the way you ask the time.

“What did the river smell like, that day?”

I opened my mouth, and nothing came out of it, not even a joke. I sat there on the end of the bed with my mouth open until the sky over the far bank went the colour of dishwater, and when I looked round, I was in the laundry, sitting on the floor against dryer number two, and the bag from 613 was in my lap, and the buzzer was going.

11. After that I went up every night.

I told myself I would not, and at half past three I would find myself on the sixth floor, with the green light over the fire door and the flattened carpet and the door standing open the width of a hand. I did not remember the stairs. I never remembered the stairs. I put it down to age, and to the hour, and to the *ginjinha*.

It went the same way every time, and I will tell you the pattern so you know it, because a thing that repeats is a thing you can learn.

First she told me a story: something about Lisbon, or the river, or the old country, told slowly, facing the window. Then I made a joke, because I cannot sit near a silence without trying to fill it, the way some people cannot sit near a crooked picture. She never laughed. And then she asked me one question, always simple, that I could not answer.

Where did Tomás like to sit on the tram?

What was the name of the song on the radio the night we were married?

What did I say to Inês when I came home from the police station?

I did not know. I did not know any of it. I had told the story of my life so many times, in the same words, that the words had worn a groove and everything else had fallen out of it. She asked me the small things, the ones that were not in the story, and I sat there with my mouth open like a fish on ice at the market, and she waited, and the sky went grey, and the buzzer took me home.

I should have been frightened. I was not frightened. I was, God help me, happy. I had someone to talk to at four in the morning, which is the loneliest hour there is, and she smelled of orange blossom.

12. In the first week of December the third rule arrived.

I was in the laundry. It was a quiet night, a Tuesday, and I was folding towels, and I smelled oranges. Not oranges: orange blossom, the white flowers, the smell that hangs over the whole south of the country in April and makes old men sit down on benches.

The tide came in. I was not in the laundry. I was in the corridor of the sixth floor, with the green light and the carpet. But the numbers on the doors were wrong. They did not say 610, 611, 612. They said 1994, 1995, 1996. And on the door where 613 should be, it said 1997.

That is the third rule, and it is the last, and it is simple. *Inside a tide, the room numbers are years.* Every door on that corridor opens onto one year of my life. I can walk along it the way you walk along a shelf of photograph albums. I do not choose which door is open. The smell chooses.

That night the smell was orange blossom, and the door that was open was 1997.

13. I went in, and it was the twelfth of June 1997, and I was getting married.

Every year on the twelfth of June, the eve of Santo António [SAN-too an-TO-nyoo], Saint Anthony, Lisbon's own saint, the city pays for the weddings of couples who cannot afford their own. They are called the Santo António weddings. The old newspaper *Diário Popular* [DYAA-ryoo poo-poo-LAAR], the *People's Daily*, began them in 1958, and they stopped after the revolution of 1974, which ended the dictatorship, and in 1997 the city brought them back. We were in the first year of the return. We had no money. Inês's mother had a bad heart and wanted to see her married before it gave out. We put our names down and were chosen, and we were married in the cathedral with a dozen other couples, all the brides in white, all the grooms in borrowed suits, all of us looking at each other sideways

as if to say, *we are not really like these people*. We were exactly like those people.

I was thirty-four. She was thirty. She had orange blossom in her hair, because that is what a Portuguese bride wears, and the smell of it came off her all day, and I kept putting my face near her head as if I were telling her a secret.

I was telling her jokes. I told her jokes all through the mass, very quietly, and she laughed into her bouquet so that her shoulders shook, and the priest looked at us, and she laughed harder. The whole of my marriage was in that: she laughed so easily, and I loved her for it, and I thought it would always be so easy.

Afterwards there was a party in the street, and the whole city was out, because it was Santo António's eve. There were paper lanterns and grilled sardines and music from every window, and we danced until the sky went white. At some point in the night, on the steps of a church in Alfama, she took my face in both her hands and said, "You smell like steam." I worked at a dry cleaner's in those days, pressing suits. "I will always know where you are," she said. "I will smell you coming."

Dryer number one buzzed. I was holding a towel, folded in half, and I had been holding it for so long that my arms ached.

14. On the ninth of December it was three years since the Cais das Colunas.

I did not go up to 613 that night. I went down to the river instead, before my shift, in the dark, and stood at the top of the marble steps between the two stone columns, and looked at the water going down the steps and the steps going down into the water.

There were tourists, even in December, even in the cold. They took photographs of each other with the river behind them. A young couple from somewhere were kissing on the third step down, with the water lapping at the fourth. I wanted to tell them. I did not know what I wanted to tell them.

I thought: I will go down one step. Only one. To see what she saw.

I could not. My legs would not do it. I stood at the top like a man at the edge of a diving board for the first time, and in the end I turned

round and walked back across the great square to the hotel, and I was early for my shift for the first time in nineteen years, and São Pedro looked up from his radio and did not say anything, and poured.

I made a joke about the tourists. He did not laugh either. It was becoming a fashion.

15. In January she told me about fado.

"You know the rule in the fado houses," she said. "Before the singer starts, somebody at the back calls out: *Silence, the fado is going to be sung.*"

I did know it. Everybody in Lisbon knows it. In the little taverns where fado is sung properly, in Alfama and the Bairro Alto [BAI-roo AAL-too], the High Quarter, the lights go down and someone calls for silence, and the room goes still. Nobody speaks. Nobody eats. Nobody lifts a glass, because a glass can clink. A waiter who is halfway across the floor with a plate will stop where he stands and wait until the song is over. For three minutes, forty strangers hold their breath together while one woman sings about what she has lost.

"Why do they do it?" she asked me. That was not the question. That was the story.

"Respect," I said.

"No," she said. "It is because grief cannot be heard over the sound of knives and forks. It is very quiet, grief. You have to stop everything to hear it at all."

Then she told me about Inês's black.

"She wore it seventeen years," she said. "In summer it was so hot that it stuck to her back when she served the bread. Women on the street stopped her and said, *Dona Inês, it has been long enough.* *Dona* [DOH-na] is what you call a woman you respect, the way you would say *Madam*. The priest said it. Her sister said it. You never said it."

"I didn't think it was my place."

"You didn't think," she said, very gently. "You made a joke about it. You said she looked like a widow in a film about the Mafia. She

wore it to be quiet, Vasco. It was the only silence she had. It was her calling for *silêncio* in a house where nobody would put down their knives and forks.”

Then she asked me her question. “What colour was her dress, the last time you saw her in anything but black?”

I did not know. I sat there. The buzzer came.

16. I stopped going into the cage.

I noticed it one night in late January, standing in front of the wire with the key in my hand, and the six bags inside it, and the German’s sheet and the old man’s pillow and the champagne woman’s blanket, and I did not want to go in. I did not need to. I had somewhere else to be at four in the morning, and someone else to keep company.

I stood there a long time. It felt like being unfaithful, which is ridiculous. They were sheets. They were the sheets of six strangers, dead for years, and I had been lying down on them every night like a dog on its master’s grave, and now I had found a warmer grave, and I was ashamed.

I want to be honest about this, because this telling, if it is anything, is me trying to be honest for once. I was in love. I did not know who with. I did not know if it was with the woman in the chair, whose face I had still never properly seen, because she never turned from the window. I did not know if it was with the smell of orange blossom. I did not know if it was with my wife, three years in the ground, whose fear came down the chute to me every night in a bag marked 613.

A man who reads sheets for a living should be able to tell the difference between those three things. I could not.

17. In February she told me about the custard tarts.

You will have eaten one, if you have been to Lisbon. Everybody has. The *pastel de nata* [pash-TEL de NAA-ta]: a little cup of flaky pastry, full of egg custard, burnt black in spots on top, eaten warm with cinnamon. There is a famous bakery out at Belém [be-LAYNG], by the great monastery, that has been making them since 1837 from a recipe that is kept in a locked room.

"This is the story Lisboaetas tell," she said. "Whether it is true, nobody knows. In the old days the monks in the monastery used egg whites to starch their robes and their altar cloths, to make them stiff and white. Thousands of eggs. And they were left with all the yolks, piles of yellow yolks, and they could not bear to waste them, so they made pastries. The most loved sweet in Portugal came out of the laundry."

I laughed. I could not help it. It was the best thing I had heard in years.

"It came out of the laundry," I said. "I have been in the wrong end of the business for nineteen years."

And for one moment, I swear it, her shoulders moved. Not a laugh. The beginning of one, the way the first drop on a window is the beginning of rain. Then it was gone, and she was still again, looking at the river.

"Why do you tell jokes at funerals, Vasco?" she said.

It was the question. I had been asked it before, by my mother, by my sister-in-law, once by a priest who had taken me aside after a mass for an uncle. I had always had an answer. I said: because somebody has to. I said: because the dead would want us to laugh. I said: because I am a man of the people.

I opened my mouth to say one of those things to her, and I heard, in my own head, before I could say it, the true answer, which was: *so that nobody will look at me.*

I did not say it. I did not say anything. But she heard it anyway. I know she did, because she nodded, once, at the window, as though somebody had finally told her the right time.

18. At the end of February the smell was warm milk, and the door that was open was 1998.

There is a smell that a newborn baby has on the top of its head. Anyone who has held one knows it. It is sweet and warm and a little like bread and not like anything else in the world. I read once, in the same dentist's waiting room, that scientists had tested it: they had women smell the clothes of newborn babies inside a brain scanner, and the part of the brain that lights up for food and for

love lit up. It is not an accident, that smell. It is a baby's first argument. It says: *keep me*.

Tomás was born in March 1998, in the big maternity hospital by the park, in the rain, at four in the morning, which should have told me something about the hours he would keep. Inês was in labour for nineteen hours and cursed me by name for the last six, beautifully, in words I did not know she knew. And then they put him on her chest, and she stopped cursing, and she put her nose to the top of his head and breathed in, and she laughed. I will never forget it. She laughed as if she had been told the best joke in the world.

Then she held him up to me, and I put my nose where hers had been.

Keep me.

I stood in that room in the tide with my face against my son's head, and I heard myself say, out loud, "I will."

The buzzer did not come. For the first time, the buzzer did not come. Instead the room went dim around me, the way a room goes when the sun goes behind a cloud, and the smell of milk went thin and far away, and I was sitting on the end of the bed in 613, and she was at the window.

She did not tell a story that night. She asked her question first.

"Do you know," she said, "where your wife slept, her last year?"

THE KING WHO DID NOT COME BACK

Dom Sebastião [dom se-bash-TYOW] was King of Portugal in the 1500s. Dom means "lord," and it is the title the Portuguese gave their kings. He came to the throne at the age of three, and he is remembered by a second name: o Desejado [oo de-ze-ZHAA-doo], "the Desired One."

He was born in 1554, less than three weeks after his father died, and the whole country had prayed for him, because without him the royal line would end. So from his first breath he was the answer to a prayer. He grew up tall and fair and fearless, raised on stories of knights and crusades, the holy wars of the Middle Ages, and when he was twenty-four he decided to go and win a war of his own.

In the summer of 1578 he sailed to Morocco with an army of some seventeen thousand men and most of the young nobility of Portugal. On the fourth of August, in the heat, on a plain near a town called Alcácer Quibir [al-KAA-ser kee-BEER], the army was destroyed in a single afternoon. Thousands were killed. Thousands more were taken prisoner. The king was last seen riding back into the fighting. His body was never clearly found.

Two years later, with no king and no heir, Portugal was taken over by Spain, and for sixty years it was not its own country.

But the Portuguese would not believe that he was dead. They said he had survived and was wandering, doing penance, suffering on purpose to make up for his mistake, and that one day he would come home. They said he would come on a morning of fog, riding up out of the sea to save his country. Men appeared claiming to be him, one after another, and people believed them. Mothers told it to their children. The children told it to theirs. The waiting even got a name: *sebastianismo* [se-bash-tya-NEEZH-moo], the hope that the one who was lost will return. In time the word came to mean any hope that refuses to accept a death.

On foggy mornings in Lisbon, people still say, half joking, that it is good weather for kings.

On a morning thick with fog
my king will come home to me;
I have waited four hundred years
and I am not tired yet.

*A whole country can stand at a window for four hundred years.
So can one man, if nobody tells him to sit down.*

III. RINSE

19. I asked São Pedro the next night, at three, over the ginjinha. I did not have to ask twice. He had been waiting to be asked for three years.

"She came in the winter," he said. "The winter of the virus, when the hotels were empty. You remember."

I remembered. December 2020. The whole city shut. The Estrela kept open with six guests and a skeleton staff, because the owner in Madrid would not admit it was dying, and I washed sheets for six people in a building made for three hundred, and the machines echoed.

"She came to the front door at eleven one night," he said. "In her black. She asked me if you were working. I said you were downstairs. She asked me if there was a room. I said there were two hundred and ninety-four rooms. She asked for one on the river side, high up, and she asked me not to tell you."

"And you didn't."

"She asked me not to."

He turned the little chocolate cup round in his fingers.

"Six-thirteen," he said. "Every night for a year, nearly. Eleven o'clock she came in. Half past six in the morning she went out, before you finished. She never paid. I would not let her. She brought me bread from the bakery, that is all, a loaf every night, still warm. I ate it at four in the morning with the radio on. I have never eaten such bread."

I said, "Why?"

I meant: why did she come. He heard: why didn't you tell me. He answered the second one.

"Because I thought it would pass," he said. "A woman grieving does strange things for a while and then she stops. I thought it would pass, and it would be a kindness not to have told you. And then it was December, and she stopped coming, and I thought: good, it has passed." He put the cup down. "And then it was the Cais das Colunas."

20. He did not cry. I want to be clear about that. He is not a man who cries. He sat on his stool in front of the board of brass keys,

with the radio singing its small sad songs beside him, and he said, very quietly:

“I have kept every key in this building for thirty years, Vasco. It is my whole job. I keep doors. I decide who comes in and I keep it to myself. And I kept the wrong door.”

I should have said something to him. I should have put my hand on his shoulder. I did not. I made a joke. I said, “Saint Peter lets one through without paperwork, and look what happens.”

He looked at me for a long moment, and then he did the kindest thing anyone has ever done for me, which was to pour me another glass and let the joke go past, like a waiter in a fado house who stops where he stands until the song is over.

21. Here is the thing I have to tell you, and I have been walking around it for months, the way you walk around a hole in the road.

For a year, every morning, the sheets from room 613 came down the chute to me. And every morning I untied the bag, and put my face to the neck of it, and read them.

I remember them. I remember a woman who did not sleep. Who lay on her back until four, and then on her side facing the window, and then, near six, curled up small, like a child in a cold bed. I remember the fear in them, the coin and the onion, every night, so strong that I used to hold my breath while I loaded the machine. They did not smell of Inês to me. They smelled of fear, and of somebody I could not place. I remember thinking: *poor woman, whoever she is. Someone should help her.*

I washed my wife’s fear with my own hands, three hundred and sixty mornings, and I did not know it was hers.

I have thought about how that could be, more than I have thought about anything, and I will come to it now, and it is the worst thing I know.

22. That night in 613 she told me what it had been like, up there, above me.

“I could not be in the flat at night,” she said. “Not alone. You were at work, and the flat was so quiet, and the door was so blue. I would

lie in our bed and listen to the silence coming out from under his door. So I came here. I came to be near you. Six floors is not near. But I could feel the machines through the building, very faintly, through the floor and the bed and my back. I lay here and felt you working, all night. It was the only way I could sleep. It was the only way I could not sleep and bear it."

She was facing the window, and I was looking at the back of her head, and she had orange blossom in her hair.

"I used to lie here and count," she said. "I would say: *he is folding now. He is at the press now. Now he is going up to have a drink with the porter.* I knew your whole night. I had never known your nights before. I had been married to you for twenty-three years and I had never known what you did between midnight and seven, and that year I knew every minute of it, and you did not know I was in the building."

"You could have come down."

"Yes," she said.

"You could have told me."

"Yes," she said. "Ask me why I did not."

I did not ask. I think I knew that if I asked, she would tell me, and I thought that if I did not ask, perhaps it would pass.

23. Now the worst thing I know.

There is some science in it, and I will keep it simple. People who live together, who share a bed for years, come to share each other's smell. It is not a poem. The sharing has been measured. The tiny living things that live on our skin, too small to see, move from one body to the other through the sheets and the towels and the touching, until a husband and wife carry the same crowd of them. After enough years, their skin smells alike. They become, to the nose, one household.

That is why I could never read Inês. I could read a stranger from Porto through two layers of hotel linen, but I could never read my wife, because when I smelled her I was smelling myself. Her fear smelled like mine because it *was* mine. It had lived on my skin before it lived on hers.

And that is why I did not know her sheets, those three hundred and sixty mornings. They did not smell of Inês. They smelled of me. I thought I was reading a stranger. I was reading my own guilt, lying awake six floors up, curled small in a cold bed.

24. In March the smell was sun cream, and river mud, and sardine smoke. The door that was open was 2004.

I did not want to go in. I stood in the corridor of the tide, in front of that door, for what felt like an hour. But the tide does not ask. It is a tide.

It was Saturday the twelfth of June, 2004, and Portugal was playing Greece.

It was the opening match of the European football championship, the first big tournament Portugal had ever hosted, and the whole country had spent a year building stadiums and a year believing. The match was in Porto, late in the day. And that same night was the eve of Santo António, the city's biggest party, so all of Lisbon was in the street at once, with the paper lanterns up and the sardines on the grills and a television on every café table.

Portugal lost, two goals to one, to Greece, which nobody could believe. So we drank to forget it. And then it was Santo António's eve, so we drank to celebrate. I was in Alfama with men from the dry cleaner's until the sky went white. I got home at five. Inês was asleep. Tomás was asleep in his room, behind the blue door, with his plastic dinosaurs arranged in order of how frightening they were.

I had promised him the beach.

25. At nine he was standing by my side of the bed in his swimming shorts, with his red sandals on, holding his bucket. He did not say anything. He just stood there and breathed at me, the way children do, until I opened my eyes.

We took the tram to Belém and the ferry across the river to Trafaria. It is a short crossing, twenty minutes on a little boat that smells of diesel and tar, and he stood at the rail the whole way with the wind in his face and his eyes screwed shut, laughing. I sat inside. The light hurt me. The sound of the engine hurt me.

The beach at Trafaria is on the river, not the sea, where the river is getting ready to become the sea. The water is calm on top. It is not calm underneath. Everybody in Lisbon knows that. I knew it.

It was the hottest day of the year so far. I put sun cream on his shoulders and his nose. I put up the umbrella. I sat down on the towel, in the shade, and he went down to the edge of the water with his bucket to dig, twenty metres away, where I could see him.

"Stay where I can see you," I said.

"I will," he said.

The smell of that beach was sun cream, and river mud, and the smoke of sardines from the restaurant behind the sand, where they were grilling lunch for Santo António's day. My head was a stone. I lay back on the towel, for a minute, only to rest my eyes. I could hear him singing to himself at the edge of the water. I could hear the ferry going back.

26. I woke up.

I do not know how long I slept. The police said, later, that it was about an hour, from what the other people on the beach remembered. I woke because the sound was wrong. There was a sound missing. It took me a moment, lying there with my eyes open under the umbrella, to know which sound it was.

He was not singing.

The bucket was at the edge of the water, on its side. One red sandal was beside it. The other one, I learned later, the river kept.

I will not tell you the rest of that afternoon. There are people who have to live it, and nobody else needs to. I will tell you only this. At the police post that evening, a young officer with a notebook asked me where I had been when my son went into the water. And I heard a voice say, "I went up the beach to buy him an ice cream."

It was my voice.

There was no ice cream. I had not gone anywhere. I had been lying on my back, sleeping off the night before, twenty metres from my son, and the river had taken him while I snored. But the sentence came out of my mouth whole, the way a lie does when it has been

waiting for you, and the officer wrote it down, and it was true from then on.

I told it to the police. I told it to my mother. I told it to a priest and a psychologist and my sister-in-law and the man who ran the café downstairs. I told it to Inês, that night, sitting on the edge of our bed with my hands between my knees.

I told it to myself so many times that I forgot there had ever been another version. It has been twenty years. I have never once, until now, said the true one.

I was asleep.

27. That night, when I came back from the police, Inês put her arms round me. It was the only time she touched me for a month afterwards. She put her face in my neck and breathed in, the way she used to at the wedding, when she said she would always know where I was.

And I felt her go still.

I did not understand it then. I understand it now. She smelled the beach on me: the sun cream and the river and the sardine smoke. And under it, she smelled what I had been doing on that beach. She smelled sleep. You can smell it on a person, the sour, heavy smell of a long sleep in the heat, of a man who has been lying down for an hour. And she smelled what came after it, which was fear, the coin and the onion, pouring off my skin, the fear of a man who knows exactly what he has done.

She knew. That night, with her face in my neck, she knew there had been no ice cream.

And she never said a word. Not once, in seventeen years. She put on her black, and she carried it. She let me tell my story, at the funerals and the christenings, to the priest and the psychologist, and she stood beside me while I told it, and she said nothing. She carried the truth for both of us, so that I could go on telling jokes.

I said this to the woman in 613. I said it all, the whole of it, the beach and the ice cream and the smell, sitting on the end of the bed at four in the morning. It was the first time I had ever said it aloud.

She was quiet for a long time.

"She could not carry it any more," she said at last, to the window. "And she could not hand it back to you. That is what she was afraid of, all that last year, up here. Not the river. She was afraid that one night she would come downstairs to the laundry and put the bag in your hands and say, *Vasco, you were asleep*. And that it would kill you. So she went to the river instead, and she took it with her."

I could not breathe. I sat on the end of the bed with my hands between my knees, the way I had sat on our bed that night in 2004, and I heard myself say:

"Well. At least she didn't have to watch me do the washing-up."

It was the worst joke of my life. I think I made it because I could not bear to hear the silence that was coming.

She did not laugh.

She turned round.

For the first time in four months, she turned from the window and looked at me, and I saw her face, and I will not describe it to you, because I could not describe it then. I will say only that it was the face of someone who has been waiting a very long time for a thing to be said, and has heard it, and is not glad, and is not sorry, and is simply there.

Then dryer number three buzzed, and I was on the laundry floor, and it was morning, and the bag in my lap said 613.

THE MORNING OF ALL SAINTS

On the first of November 1755, Lisbon was one of the richest cities in Europe, full of gold and spices from Brazil and India. It was All Saints' Day, a holy day, when the dead are remembered, and at half past nine in the morning the churches were full, and every altar was lit with candles.

At about twenty to ten the ground began to move. It shook three times, for several minutes in all. Churches fell on the people praying inside them. Houses, palaces, the royal library, the new opera house, whole streets came down. A cloud of dust rose over the city so thick that people could not see the sun.

Those who could get out ran for the one place where nothing could fall on them: the open ground along the river. They crowded into the great square by the water, where the royal palace had stood, and onto a new marble quay that ran out into the river. They stood there in their thousands, in their holy-day best, covered in dust, and looked at the water, because the water was the only thing that had not moved.

Then it did.

The river drew back. It went out and out, as if someone had pulled a plug, and left the riverbed bare: mud, and rocks, and the wrecks of old ships, and cargo lost years before, lying in the open for everyone to see. The story goes that some people walked out onto the mud to look at what the river had been keeping.

Then it came back. Sailors who saw it said it rose *like a mountain of water*. It came up over the quay and into the square and through the streets beyond, and when it went out again it took people with it. It came three times. The marble quay, with the crowd still on it, sank into the mud and was never seen again.

And then the fires began, from all those candles, and burned for five days.

Nobody knows how many died. Tens of thousands. Afterwards the city was rebuilt, straight and orderly, in the way you can still see it today. The great square by the water was laid out again, and at its

edge, where the river meets the stone, they built a new flight of marble steps going down into the water, between two columns. It is called the Cais das Colunas. It stands on what the river left.

The earth shook in the morning,
and the river went away;
those who went down to see the bottom
have not come back to this day.

*When the water pulls back and shows you what it has been
keeping, the old people said, do not go down to look. Run up
the hill. It is coming back.*

IV. SPIN

28. By May the tides were coming every day.

They did not wait for the laundry any more. They came on the tram, and in the bakery queue, and once in the middle of the Rua Augusta [ROO-a ow-GOOSH-ta], the long street of shops that runs down to the great square, so that I found myself standing still in the crowd while the tourists broke round me like water round a post. They came with smells I could not find: burnt sugar, and oranges, and milk, and always, underneath, the river.

And the nights began to repeat.

I will explain this as simply as I can, because it frightened me more than anything, and because I learned, as I learned the other rules, how to know it. A night would come round twice. I would untie the bag from room 311 and read the businessman's Tuesday heart attack, fear, relief, shame, and wash it, and fold it. And then, an hour later, the same bag would come down the chute again, the same tag, the same pencil, the same sheets, and I would stand there with it in my hands and know: *I have already done this. This is the same night, and I am in it twice.*

That was how I could tell. The bags do not lie. If the same bag comes down the chute twice, the night is going round again.

I said nothing to anyone. What would I have said? I went up to 613 every night, and she sat facing the window again, as if she had never turned round, and she told me her stories, and I made my jokes, and she asked her questions. But her questions were different now. They were not about the past.

"How long do you think you can go on doing this?" she said.

And: "What do you think happens to a man who never tells the truth, and then tells it, once, to a woman in a hotel room at four in the morning?"

And: "Who will fold the sheets when you are gone?"

29. On the ninth of May, a Friday, I fell down in the laundry.

I do not remember it. I remember the smell of burnt sugar, very strong, stronger than it had ever been, and the laundry beginning to fill with brown water, and the red sandal coming towards me across the surface, and then nothing at all.

São Pedro found me. He told me afterwards that he had heard the buzzer from dryer three going on and on, for twenty minutes, with nobody to open the door. A buzzer that goes on that long in an empty building is a strange thing to hear at four in the morning, he said. It sounds like somebody calling. He came down the basement stairs, which he had not done in eleven years because of his knees, and found me on the floor between the washers with my eyes open and my mouth bleeding where I had bitten my tongue, and my legs moving as if I were walking somewhere.

He sat on the floor with me until I came back. He did not call an ambulance. He knew I would not forgive him. He sat on the concrete with his bad knees, in his porter's jacket, holding my head in his lap, and when I came back he was the first thing I smelled: pipe tobacco, and old wool, and the little chocolate cups.

"Vasco," he said. "It is time I showed you something."

30. He did not show me that night. He made me wait until the day.

The night porter does not work in the day. In twenty years I had never once seen São Pedro in daylight; I think I believed he dissolved at dawn, like a ghost in a story. But at noon that Friday he was waiting for me at the service door in a grey suit I had never seen, looking smaller and older in the sun, and he took me up in the lift to the sixth floor.

In daylight, the corridor was only a corridor. Tired carpet. A trolley left by a chambermaid. A window at the end with the river in it, bright and ordinary.

At the door of 613 he took the key from his pocket, the heavy brass key with its brass fob, the key I had seen hanging on its hook every night for six months, and he unlocked the door. It had been locked.

He opened it and stood aside to let me see.

The room was dark. The curtains were shut, the heavy hotel curtains, and they had been shut for so long that the sun had faded a line down the edges of them. There was a smell of damp. There was a brown stain on the ceiling in the shape of a country I did not know. The furniture was under dust sheets: the wardrobe, the desk, the lamp, all of it standing there under white cloth like guests who have been told to wait and have waited too long.

The mattress was bare.

There was no woman. There was no chair by the window. The chair was in the corner, under its own dust sheet, facing the wall.

And on the floor, from the door to the bed, and from the bed to the window, there was a path through the dust. One path. The marks of one pair of feet, worn smooth, going the same way, over and over, night after night.

At the end of the bed, on the bare mattress, there was a set of sheets. Clean sheets, from my own laundry, folded in the way I fold them and nobody else does, with the corners turned in like the flap of an envelope. My fold. Beside them, a laundry bag, with a paper tag on the drawstring, and on the tag, in pencil, in my own handwriting, the number 613.

I stood in the doorway and looked at it for a long time.

Nobody had slept in room 613 since Inês. Nobody at all.

Except me.

31. São Pedro told me the rest in the corridor, with the door still open, in the plain voice he uses to tell a guest the price of a room.

"Every night since November," he said, "a little after three, you come up from the laundry with a set of sheets under your arm. You go past the desk. You do not look at me. I say your name and you do not hear it. You take the key from the board, and you go up the stairs, all six floors, slowly, like a man carrying a child. At about half past five you come down again with the bag, and you put the key back on its hook, and you go down to the laundry, and you put the bag in the chute on the first floor so that it comes down to you. And then you open it as if you have never seen it before."

"You didn't stop me."

"The first night I followed you up, in the lift. You made the bed, very carefully, the way you make all the beds. Then you lay down on it, on your side, facing the window, and you talked. For two hours. To the curtains. You told jokes. You waited, as if somebody was answering. Then you cried a little, in your sleep. Then you stripped the bed and folded it and came down." He was looking at the

carpet. "I thought it was grief. I thought it would pass. I thought, it is a kindness, not to wake him."

I heard it then. *I thought it would pass*. He had said it once before, about another person who climbed those stairs at night to lie in that room and be near me. He had kept that door for her, and now he had kept it for me.

"The sheets," I said. "The fear in them."

"Was yours," he said. "You were the only one in them."

32. The doctor was a young woman with a soft voice and a photograph of the inside of my head on a screen, and I will give you what she said as simply as she gave it to me, because she was kind, and because it was simple.

There was a growth in my head. It was slow, and it was not the kind that spreads through the body; the word for that is *benign*, which means *kind*, which is a joke that only a doctor could keep a straight face through. It had started years ago, on the nerves of smell, low down behind my eyes, where they run along the floor of the skull. It had grown very slowly back towards the side of my brain, where smell and memory are kept close together, like two old people sharing a bench.

"That is why the smells," she said. "It has been pressing on the place that makes them. It has been making smells that are not there. The burnt sugar is very common. And it has been causing small seizures, storms in the brain, that start with a smell and take you somewhere else for a while. What you call your tides, we call *auras*. An aura is the warning a seizure gives, before it comes. For some people it is a light, or a sound. For you, it has always been a smell."

"And the walking?"

"That too. People walk, during these seizures, and talk, and do things, and do them quite well, and do not remember. They are not asleep and they are not awake. They are somewhere in between."

She was very kind about the next part.

"We can take it out," she said. "And you will live. It will stop the seizures, and the smells that are not there. But it sits on the nerves

of smell, Senhor Pell, on both of them, and to take it out we will have to cut them. That cannot be undone. After the operation you will not smell anything again. Not the smells that are not there, and not the ones that are."

"And if you don't take it out?"

"It will keep growing," she said. "More seizures, and worse. And in the end, not soon, but in the end, it will kill you."

I thought about it. Then I asked her the only thing I wanted to know.

"Will I still be able to smell my wife?"

She did not understand. I did not explain. I thanked her, and went home, and did not open the blue door, and did not open the drawer.

33. That night I went up to 613 awake.

I want you to understand the difference. For six months I had climbed those stairs in a dream, in a tide, and not remembered it. That night I climbed them on purpose, slowly, like a man going up to his own trial, and I felt every step in my knees. I took the key from the board myself. São Pedro watched me take it and did not say a word.

On the landing I smelled orange blossom, though there were no flowers anywhere in that building, and I knew what it meant, and I knew she was not there, and I went on anyway. The door was open the width of a hand, with lamplight behind it. I pushed it.

The dust sheets were gone. The chair was by the window. She was in it, facing the river, with her hands in her lap, as if nothing had happened, as if I had not stood in this doorway at noon and seen the bare mattress and the path in the dust.

"I know what you are," I said.

"Good," she said. "Sit down. You are letting the corridor in."

I sat on the end of the bed. And that night, for the first time, she did not tell me a story, and I did not make a joke, and she explained herself, very simply, the way you explain something to a child who is old enough at last to be told.

"I am not Inês," she said. "You know that. Inês is in the ground at Alto de São João [AAL-too de sow zhoo-OW], the big cemetery on the hill, and she is not coming back, whatever you smell. And I am not a ghost. There are no ghosts in this hotel, only guests who have not checked out.

"I am what your body made out of what you could not say. For twenty years you have been carrying a sentence you would not speak. You carried it so long that it grew heavy, and your body could not put it down, and your mouth would not open for it. So your body did the only thing it could. It built somebody who would ask. It built her out of what you had: out of the smell of oranges from your wedding, and the river, and bread, and the fear on Inês's pillowcase, which was your own fear. It put her in a chair by a window in the only room in Lisbon where she had ever waited for you. And it walked you up the stairs every night, so that you could say it to her.

"You have said it now. That is all I was for."

34. I sat on the end of the bed for a long time after that.

I thought about nineteen years in the laundry. All those nights. All those sheets I had put my face to and read. The businessman's heart attacks and the bride's terror and the man in 517 crying about Marta. All that fear, the coin and the onion, coming down the chute night after night, from every floor of the building, so much fear that I had come to think the whole world was frightened, all the time, of everything.

"How much of it was theirs?" I said.

"Some of it," she said. "People are frightened. You were not wrong about that. The sweat of a frightened man is real, and it does tell, and you had a better nose for it than anyone. But you could never tell whose fear it was. That was always your trouble. Yours smelled like everyone's, because it was on everything you touched. You read the whole building by the light of your own fear, and you called it a gift."

I thought of the German cyclist in 403, the one whose sheets had smelled of wind and bananas and no fear at all. How I had envied

him. I had envied him because he was the only sheet in nineteen years I had ever been able to read without finding myself in it.

35. "You know what I am going to ask you," she said.

"Yes."

"The operation."

"If I have it," I said, "I lose you."

"Yes."

"I lose the pillowcase. I lose Inês. I lose the bread, and the orange blossom, and the smell of his head when he was born. I lose everything I have left. I will be a man in a flat on the eighth hill with nothing in the drawer but cotton."

"Yes," she said. "And if you do not have it, you keep all of that, for a while. You keep coming up here. You keep telling me jokes. And one night you will fall down in the laundry and there will be nobody there, and the buzzer will go on and on until the day staff come in, and they will find you on the floor between the washers, and they will send your sheets down to be burned. And nobody will keep them."

She turned round then, for the second time, and looked at me.

"Inês went down the steps," she said. "You do not have to."

36. I had a month. I spent it smelling Lisbon.

I walked the whole city, all its hills, all eight of them, with my nose up like a dog, as if I were a tourist and would never be back. Which was true.

I smelled bread coming out of the ovens in Graça at five in the morning, and I stood outside Inês's old bakery until the girl behind the counter came out to ask if I was all right. I smelled the salt cod, the *bacalhau* [ba-ka-LYOW], stacked stiff and white as boards in the grocers' doorways in the Baixa [BAI-sha], the low town: salt cod, which smells of a sea a thousand miles away. I smelled the purple jacaranda trees coming into flower along the avenues, the whole city going violet overhead, a smell like honey and dust. I smelled coffee, and petrol, and rain on the hot calçada, which is the best smell in the world and which there is no word for in any language. I

smelled the first sardines of the season on the grills in Alfama, getting ready for June. I smelled the river, every day, from every hill, the way you look at a face you are going to have to remember.

I did not smell burnt sugar. I did not want to go anywhere. For once, for a month, I was exactly where I was.

On the last night I went to a fado house in Alfama, alone, and sat at a table at the back. When the lights went down, a man near the kitchen called out for silence, because the fado was going to be sung, and the room went still, and nobody moved, and a woman in a black shawl sang, with her eyes closed, about the sea that had kept her son.

I did not make a joke. I did not want to. For three minutes I sat in the dark with forty strangers, not eating, not drinking, not moving, and I heard it, at last, very quietly, under everything: the sound grief makes, when you stop the knives and forks long enough to let it.

UNTIL THE END OF THE WORLD

This is Portugal's most famous love story, and every Portuguese child knows it. Pedro was the son of King Afonso [a-FON-soo] IV and heir to the throne. Inês de Castro [ee-NAYSH de KASH-troo] was a young noblewoman from Galicia, the green country just north of Portugal. It happened nearly seven hundred years ago, in the 1300s.

Inês came to the Portuguese court as a lady-in-waiting, a noble companion, to the princess Pedro had been made to marry for reasons of state. Pedro fell in love with Inês instead, and she with him, and everybody could see it. The old king sent Inês away. It did no good. When Pedro's wife died, he brought Inês back, and they lived together openly in Coimbra [KWEEM-bra], the old university city on the river Mondego [mon-DAY-goo], and they had four children.

The king was afraid. Inês's brothers were powerful men in Castile, the great kingdom next door that would later become part of Spain, and the king feared that through her they would take hold of Portugal. So on the seventh of January 1355, while Pedro was away hunting, three of the king's men went to the house by the river in Coimbra and killed her.

Two years later the old king died and Pedro was crowned. He hunted down the men who had killed her. He caught two of them and had their hearts cut out, because, he said, they had never had any.

And then, the legend says, he did something stranger. He had Inês's body taken out of her grave, dressed in royal robes, and set on a throne with a crown on her head. And he made the whole court, every lord and bishop in Portugal, come forward one by one and kneel and kiss the hand of their dead queen.

Historians say that part never happened; it was first written down two hundred years later. The Portuguese tell it anyway. It is the part everybody remembers.

Pedro had two great stone tombs made for them in the monastery at Alcobaça [al-koo-BAA-sa], and today they lie facing each other across the church, so that on the Last Day, when the dead rise, the first thing each of them sees will be the other. The words carved there, people say, are *until the end of the world*.

In Coimbra, in the garden by the river where she is said to have died, there is a spring. People today call it the Fonte das Lágrimas [FON-t dash LAA-gree-mash], the Fountain of Tears, and they say the red weed on its stones is her blood. Portugal's great poet Luís de Camões [loo-EESH de ka-MOYNESH] told her story in 1572, in the long poem he wrote about his country, and he ended it with that spring. Here it is in English. In his poem, the nymphs of the river, the spirits who live in its water, weep for Inês for so long that their tears become the spring, and they name it after her love:

The daughters of the river wept her dark death
and kept it in their memory for years,
and to remember her for ever, they turned
the tears they had wept into a clear spring.

They gave it the name it still carries:
the loves of Inês, which happened there.
See how fresh the spring is that waters the flowers:
its water is tears, and its name is love.

*A king crowned a dead woman and made the whole world
kneel to her. It did not bring her back. It only meant that
nobody, not even the king, was ever allowed to stop grieving.*

V. FOLD

37. On the night before the operation, São Pedro told me why he keeps doors.

We were at the desk, at three, with the *ginjinha*. The radio was playing, very low. He did not look at me while he talked. He looked at the board of brass keys.

"I had a brother," he said. "Younger. Rui [HOO-ee]. He went to sea on the cod boats, when he was nineteen, in 1966."

I knew about the cod boats. Every Portuguese man of our age knows. For generations, every spring, a fleet of white-painted ships left Lisbon for the far side of the Atlantic, to the cold seas off Newfoundland and Greenland, to fish for cod. The men fished alone, one man in one small boat, with a line, out of sight of the ship, for six months. Some of them rowed out into the fog in the morning and never rowed back.

"The ship came home in October," he said. "Rui did not. Somebody told my mother he was lost in the fog. Somebody else said he had jumped ship in Canada, for a girl, and was living there. My mother believed that one. She believed it until she died. Every night she left the door on the latch, in case."

He turned the chocolate cup in his fingers.

"When she died, I took a night job. The night job. It seemed the right thing. If a man comes home late after a long time away, somebody should be awake to let him in." He shrugged, very slightly. "Every hotel is full of doors. That is all. I keep them."

Then he looked at me for the first time.

"You are the only person I ever kept a door for who came back through it," he said. "Go to bed, Vasco. You have an appointment."

38. But I went up to 613 first. You knew I would.

She was at the window. The river was black and full of lights, and it was June, and warm, and far away in Alfama somebody was practising on a guitar for the festival.

"Your wife was named after a queen," she said.

"Half the girls in Portugal were named after that queen. Inês hated it. She said it was the worst love story ever told. She said: *a man*

digs up his dead wife to make everybody kiss her hand, and they call it romance. It is not romance. It is a man who will not let her rest."

"She was right," she said.

I did not answer. I knew what she meant. I was a man with a dead woman's pillowcase sealed in a drawer and six dead strangers' sheets in a cage, who had climbed six floors every night for half a year to talk to a woman who was not there. I had been making the whole world kneel and kiss her hand.

"You are going to have the operation," she said. It was not a question. It was the first time she had told me what I was going to do.

"I have not decided."

"You decided at the fado house," she said. "When you heard it. You do not have to make me say goodbye twice."

39. On the last night, she told me one more story. It was the only one she ever told me that I already knew, and I had never heard it from that side.

"There was a girl who worked in a bakery in Graça," she said. "She was twenty-seven and she had been told she was too serious to be married. Every morning at a quarter past seven a man came in for bread. He came from the night shift at a dry cleaner's in the Baixa and he smelled of steam and hot cloth, like a shirt just off the iron, and he always had a joke. They were terrible jokes. She did not laugh at them, for six months, on principle. He did not stop. Every morning, one joke and one loaf.

"And one morning in winter he came in and said nothing at all. He paid for his bread and stood there, and she saw he had been crying, because his mother was in the hospital. And she did not know what to say. So she told *him* a joke. It was a terrible joke. She had been saving it for six months in case she ever needed it. And he laughed so hard he had to sit down on the floor of the bakery, among the flour sacks, and she laughed too, and she could not stop, and the owner came out from the back to see who was dying.

"That was how it began. Not with his jokes. With hers. He never knew that. He thought he had won her with his jokes. He had won her by needing one."

My eyes burned. Nothing came. Nothing had come since the beach. I had not cried at my mother's funeral, or at my wife's. I had told jokes.

"You were not a bad husband," she said. "You were a frightened one. Those are different things. She knew the difference. She knew it better than you did."

She stood up. In seven months I had never seen her stand. She came across the room and stood in front of me, and put her hand on my face, and I smelled orange blossom, and bread, and the river, and, for the first time, underneath, nothing. No fear at all. Only her.

"Go down the stairs, Vasco," she said. "Not the steps. The stairs."

I did not see her go. I closed my eyes to keep the smell a moment longer, and when I opened them, the room was dark, and the curtains were shut, and the furniture was under its white sheets, and I was sitting on a bare mattress in an empty room, and I was awake.

40. At six in the morning, before the taxi came, I opened the drawer by the bed.

It was not her birthday. That was the rule, and I broke it. I cut the bag open for the fourth and last time, and put my face inside, and breathed.

Warm bread. The almond soap from the box with the blue bird. Her hair.

And that was all.

The fear was gone. The coin and the onion, which I had smelled in that pillowcase three years running, which I had smelled on her every day of her last seventeen years, was not there. I breathed in again and again, with my face pressed into the cotton, and it was not there.

It had never been in the pillowcase. It had never been hers. It had been mine, and I had been smelling it on everything I loved, and last night I had set it down.

What was left was only her. I had not smelled only her since 2004.

I sat on the bed with my face in the pillowcase until the taxi sounded its horn in the street. Then I folded it, with the corners turned in like an envelope, and put it back in the drawer, and did not seal it, and went down the stairs.

41. They opened my head on the eleventh of June and took the growth out, and with it, as she had promised, the two thin nerves that had brought the world in through my nose all my life, and I woke up in a room that smelled of nothing at all.

42. I will tell you what it is like, since I am one of the few people who can tell you both sides.

It is like a city with the sound turned off. Everything is where it was. The trams still run up the hill to Graça, the washing still hangs across the alleys in Alfama, the river is still there at the bottom of every street. But it has gone flat, like a photograph of itself. I walk through it the way you walk through a museum.

Food is the worst. Nobody warns you. Most of what we call taste is smell, it turns out, and without it the tongue on its own can tell you only a few plain things: sweet, salt, sour, bitter. A pastel de nata is a warm, sweet, soft thing. A grilled sardine is a hot, salty, oily thing. Coffee is bitter water. I eat because I must.

And the jokes have gone. That surprised me most. I had not known how many of my jokes came through my nose, how much of my whole life was that: coming into a room and smelling it, and saying something clever about what I smelled, so that nobody would look at me. Now I come into a room and there is nothing to say. I am a comedian with no material. I stand there. People look at me.

I have let them.

43. In August I went back to the Estrela.

The manager did not want me. What use, he said, kindly, is a night laundryman without a nose? I told him that the machines do not know the difference. São Pedro said something to him that I did not hear, and he gave me my job back.

So I wash the sheets. The chute speaks at two in the morning, and the bags come down, and I untie them, and I do not put my face to them, because there is nothing there for me to read. I load the machines. I fold. I press. The businessman from Porto has his heart attacks on Tuesdays, I suppose. The sisters are still sisters. The man in 517 may still be crying about Marta. I will never know.

I think of the washerwomen of Caneças, carrying the city's sheets home on their donkeys, knowing everything and saying nothing. *What the cloth tells you, the water keeps.* For twenty years I broke that rule every night. Now I could not break it if I tried. I wash what the city cannot say, and I do not ask.

I emptied the cage in September. I did not burn the sheets. I washed them, all six sets, one set at a time, on a long hot cycle, and dried them and ironed them and folded them with the corners turned in like envelopes, and I put them back into the hotel's own linen, onto the shelves, among the others. They are on the beds of the Estrela now, somewhere, clean. Guests sleep in them and do not know. That seemed the right place for them. Not a grave. A bed.

At three o'clock I go up to the desk. The radio plays fado, very low. São Pedro pours the ginjinha into the chocolate cups. It tastes of sweet and of nothing. He asks me, every night, "Well?" And I say, every night, "I have no idea," and it is the truest thing I have said at that desk in twenty years.

He has started to laugh at it.

THE SAINT OF LOST THINGS

Santo António, Saint Anthony, was born in Lisbon at the end of the 1100s, and though he died far away in Italy, and most of the world calls him Anthony of Padua, Lisbon has never let him go. He is the city's own saint. He is known for two things: he helps you find what you have lost, and he helps you find someone to love.

Every year, on the night of the twelfth of June, the eve of his feast, the whole of Lisbon goes out into the street. The old quarters, Alfama and Graça and Mouraria [moh-ra-REE-a] and the rest, hang paper garlands and coloured lanterns across every alley, and set up tables and grills outside every door. These street parties are called *arraiais* [a-ra-YAISH]. The smoke of grilled sardines, eaten on thick bread that soaks up the oil, rises over the whole city, so that for one night Lisbon smells of one thing from end to end. Each neighbourhood sends a costumed parade, the *marchas* [MAR-shash], dancing down the great avenue, and the city stays up singing until the sun comes over the river. On that same day, the city marries its Santo António couples.

And on that night, people give each other a *manjerico* [man-zhe-REE-koo]. It is a small pot of bushy, sweet basil, round as a ball, with a paper carnation stuck in it and a little paper flag carrying a four-line love verse, a *quadra* [KWAA-dra]. In the old days a young man gave one to the girl he loved, and she kept it on her windowsill all year, until he brought her the next.

There is one rule about the manjerico, and everybody in Lisbon knows it. You must never put your nose to it. The old people say that if you sniff it, it will die. Instead, you brush the palm of your hand lightly over the top of it, and then you lift your hand to your face and smell your own palm.

The scent is carried to you on your own skin. That is the only way it is allowed to come.

Take this little pot of basil
and its paper carnation too;
don't smell it, or it will die.
Smell your hand; it is more true.

*Santo António finds what is lost. He does not always give it
back. Sometimes he only shows you where it went.*

44. On Saturday the thirteenth of June, 2026, Santo António's day, I crossed the river.

It was twenty-two years to the day. The city was still hoarse from the night before, and the paper garlands were still up across the alleys, and the grills were being lit again outside the doors in Alfama. I walked through the smoke of a thousand sardines and smelled nothing. I watched the people breathing it in, their faces opening as they did, and I knew exactly what it was they were smelling, and it was as far from me as the moon.

I took the tram to Belém. I bought a ticket for the ferry, and it cost one euro and some cents, and the man in the booth did not look up, and it was the simplest thing in the world. I had not done it in twenty-two years.

I stood at the rail. The wind came up off the water into my face, and I closed my eyes the way he had, and I felt it, cold and wet and clean, and I could not smell it, and that did not matter as much as I had feared.

At Trafaria I walked down onto the sand. It was hot. There were families under umbrellas, and children at the edge of the water with buckets, and a restaurant behind the beach grilling sardines for the saint. I walked down to the place. I knew the place. I have always known it. Twenty metres from where the umbrella had been, where the sand goes dark and wet, where the river is getting ready to become the sea.

I stood there at the edge of the water and I said it out loud. Not loudly. Nobody on that beach heard me, or if they heard me, they did not look up. I said it to the river, because the river was the only one who had been there who had not already heard it.

"I was asleep," I said.

The river did what rivers do. It came in, and it went out.

Then I sat down on the sand, and I stayed there all afternoon, until the families packed up their umbrellas and went home to their parties, with my arms round my knees and my eyes open, watching the children at the edge of the water. I did not lie down. I did not close my eyes once. It was the least I could do, and twenty-two years too late, and I did it anyway.

45. When the ferry brought me back across to Belém, it was evening, and São Pedro was standing on the quay.

He was in his grey day suit. I had not told him where I was going. He had not needed telling; he keeps the doors of the whole city, and he knows the dates. He was holding something in both hands, carefully, the way he holds the key to a good room.

It was a manjerico. A small round pot of basil, bright green, with a red paper carnation stuck in the top, and a little paper flag with a verse on it that I did not read.

"For the saint," he said. "It is his day. Somebody should give you one."

I took it. It weighed almost nothing. I held it the way you hold a thing that is alive and might die of the wrong kind of love.

I did not put my nose to it. I know the rule. I brushed the palm of my right hand over the top of it, lightly, the way my mother taught me, the way Inês did every June on our windowsill. I felt the little leaves spring back against my skin. Then I lifted my hand to my face, and closed my eyes, and breathed in.

Nothing.

My own palm, and nothing. Not the basil. Not the river, or the sardines, or the salt of the evening. Not Inês's hands, which had done this on our windowsill every June, and which I had always, always smelled on mine afterwards. Nothing at all.

And my body, which had carried the truth for twenty-two years and had finally, on that beach, been allowed to set it down, did the only thing it had left.

I stood on the quay at Belém with a pot of basil in one hand and my face in the other, and I wept for my son, and for my wife, and for the smell of his head on the morning he was born, and for all of it, for the first time since the river, with the whole city singing for its saint behind me, and São Pedro standing beside me with his hand on my back, not saying a word.

I could not smell any of it. But my face was wet, and the wet ran down to the corner of my mouth, and I tasted it.

Salt. That much they cannot take from you.

GLOSSARY

Afonso IV [a-FON-soo] — King of Portugal from 1325 to 1357, Pedro's father, who ordered the death of Inês de Castro.

Alcácer Quibir [al-KAA-ser kee-BEER] — A town in northern Morocco near which King Sebastião's army was destroyed on 4 August 1578.

Alcobaça [al-koo-BAA-sa] — A town north of Lisbon whose great monastery holds the tombs of Pedro and Inês de Castro.

Alfama [al-FAA-ma] — Lisbon's oldest quarter, a maze of steep alleys on the hill below the castle.

Alto de São João [AAL-too de sow zhoo-OW] — Portuguese, *Saint John's Heights*. One of Lisbon's large cemeteries, on a hill in the east of the city.

arraiais [a-ra-YAISH] — Portuguese, *street parties*. The neighbourhood festivals of June, with lanterns, music and grilled sardines.

bacalhau [ba-ka-LYOW] — Portuguese, *salt cod*. Cod dried and salted stiff, the national food of Portugal.

Bairro Alto [BAI-roo AAL-too] — Portuguese, *the High Quarter*. A hilltop district of Lisbon known for its bars and fado houses.

Baixa [BAI-sha] — Portuguese, *the low town*. Lisbon's flat centre by the river, rebuilt in straight streets after 1755.

Belém [be-LAYNG] — A riverside district of west Lisbon; the name means Bethlehem.

Cais das Colunas [KAISH dash koo-LOO-nash] — Portuguese, *the Quay of the Columns*. Marble steps between two stone columns leading from Lisbon's great square down into the river.

Cais do Sodré [KAISH doo so-DREH] — Portuguese, *Sodré's Quay*. The old riverside docks district of Lisbon, once the sailors' quarter.

calçada [kal-SAA-da] — Portuguese, *pavement*. Lisbon's hand-laid pavements of small black and white stones, beautiful and slippery in the rain.

calceteiros [kal-se-TAY-roosh] — Portuguese, *pavers*. The craftsmen who set the calçada stone by stone.

Camões, Luís de [loo-EESH de ka-MOYNsh] — Portugal's greatest poet, who published the national epic in 1572.

Caneças [ka-NAY-sash] — A village on the hills north of Lisbon, famous for its springs and its washerwomen.

Coimbra [KWEEM-bra] — Portugal's old university city on the river Mondego, where Inês de Castro was killed.

Desejado, o [oo de-ze-ZHAA-doo] — Portuguese, *the Desired One*. The name given to King Sebastião, whose birth the country had prayed for.

Diário Popular [DYAA-ryoo poo-poo-LAAR] — Portuguese, *the People's Daily*. A Lisbon newspaper that began the Santo António weddings in 1958.

Dom [dom] — Portuguese, *lord*. The title given to Portuguese kings and nobles.

Dona [DOH-na] — Portuguese, *lady*. A respectful way to address a woman.

Estrela [esh-TRAY-la] — Portuguese, *star*. The name of the hotel where Vasco works.

fado [FAA-doo] — Portuguese, *fate*. Lisbon's mournful folk song of loss and the sea, sung by one voice with two guitars.

Fonte das Lágrimas [FON-t dash LAA-gree-mash] — Portuguese, *the Fountain of Tears*. A spring in a garden in Coimbra, said to have risen from the tears of Inês de Castro.

ginjinha [zheen-ZHEE-nya] — Portuguese, *little sour cherry*. A sweet, dark liqueur made from sour cherries, drunk from tiny cups.

Graça [GRAA-sa] — Portuguese, *grace*. A high neighbourhood of Lisbon where Vasco lives.

Inês [ee-NAYSH] — Portuguese form of Agnes. Vasco's wife.

Inês de Castro [ee-NAYSH de KASH-troo] — A noblewoman from Galicia, beloved of Prince Pedro, killed at Coimbra in 1355.

lavadeiras [la-va-DAY-rash] — Portuguese, *washerwomen*. The village women who once washed Lisbon's laundry by hand in the streams.

Lisboetas [leezh-BWAY-tash] — Portuguese, *people of Lisbon*. The people who live in Lisbon.

luto [LOO-too] — Portuguese, *mourning*. The custom of wearing black after a death, sometimes for years.

manjerico [man-zhe-REE-koo] — Portuguese, *bush basil*. A pot of basil with a paper carnation and a love verse, given on Santo António's night.

marchas [MAR-shash] — Portuguese, *marches*. The costumed parades each neighbourhood sends dancing through Lisbon on Santo António's eve.

Marta [MAAR-ta] — The name the man in room 517 cries in his sleep.

Mondego [mon-DAY-goo] — The river that runs through Coimbra.

Mouraria [moh-ra-REE-a] — Portuguese, *the Moorish quarter*. An old neighbourhood of Lisbon where the Moors lived after the city was taken.

mouras encantadas [MOH-rash en-kan-TAA-dash] — Portuguese, *enchanted Moorish girls*. Spirit maidens of legend, bound by a spell to springs and wells.

Ofiusa [o-fee-OO-za] — Greek, *land of serpents*. The half-serpent queen of the legend of Lisbon's founding.

pastel de nata [pash-TEL de NAA-ta] — Portuguese, *cream pastry*. Lisbon's custard tart, eaten warm with cinnamon.

porteiro da noite [poor-TAY-roo da NOY-t] — Portuguese, *porter of the night*. The hotel worker who keeps the front desk and the keys overnight.

quadra [KWAA-dra] — Portuguese, *set of four*. The traditional four-line Portuguese folk verse.

Rua Augusta [ROO-a ow-GOOSH-ta] — Portuguese, *August Street*.

The long street of shops leading down to Lisbon's great square.

Rua da Graça [ROO-a da GRAA-sa] — Portuguese, *Graça Street*.

The main street of Graça, where Inês sold bread.

Rui [HOO-ee] — The night porter's brother, lost with the cod fleet.

Santo António [SAN-too an-TO-nyoo] — Saint Anthony, born in

Lisbon: finder of lost things, patron of lovers. His feast is 13 June.

São João [sow zhoo-OW] — Saint John. On his eve, 23 June, the

mouras encantadas appear.

São Pedro [sow PAY-droo] — Saint Peter, who holds the keys of

Heaven. Vasco's name for the night porter.

saudade [sow-DAA-d] — Portuguese, *longing*. Loving someone in

the shape of the space they left.

sebastianismo [se-bash-tya-NEEZH-moo] — Portuguese,

Sebastianism. The belief that the lost king would return; a hope that refuses a death.

Sebastião, Dom [dom se-bash-TYOW] — King of Portugal, lost in

battle in Morocco in 1578, aged twenty-four.

Senhor [se-NYOR] — Portuguese, *sir*. The Portuguese form of

Mister.

Tomás [too-MAASH] — Portuguese form of Thomas. Vasco's son.

Trafaria [tra-fa-REE-a] — A fishing town on the south bank, where

the river meets the sea.

Vasco [VAASH-koo] — A Portuguese name, carried by the navigator

Vasco da Gama. The laundryman.

*The mind tells the story.
The body keeps the truth.*



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