

PART 1

She must dispose of it.

The killing had been easier than this. Her father had started it—she finished it—but since her father was dead too it was left to Jenny to handle things. That's what he had said to do.

Dispose of it.

Easy to do on a raw, late-winter day in Penn's Woods. Sylvania.

Jenny hefts the axe overhead, forces her arms, shoulders, and back to *hew* into—and he's stubborn, still no give, still nothing like the chickens with their necks crunching with a flick of wrist, like twigs really. No give but red, red, in truth a darkish red dribbling, a stain gathering on cloth, flannel maybe. Did his mother make it as her mother makes flannel, gathering, gathering wool into fine, fine thread, gauzy thread, fingers taut on the warp? Mrs. Schneidermann at the store telling her she should enter her mother's flannel in the fair this summer—It's a gift your mother has, she said.

Jenny seeing but not with eyes, she with axe hefted overhead, force of legs down and down and *snap* missing the trunk and there now, a limb dangling, not the axe's intention, a spurt this time of black, and Jenny watching, hoisting axe above her own heart—

This was what her father had raised her for. These woods, these people—hard to say which affected the other more—hard people, hard woods. Woods good for burying people in, then forgetting all about them. Hills that went on and on, thick with pine, young

hardwoods struggling up, new maples and oak taking root only about twenty years ago, kind of like her, pretty young here in 1915.

Where in the Sam Hill is her axe going, certainly *slash* not where she had in mind—a mere slice in the trunk is the best she seems to be able to do, lifting the haft again. It's made of hickory, yes—holding the haft as high as she can stretch, then letting her hands go loose along the wood, made smooth by her father's hands, by her hands too a bit since he's been sick and keeping the woodpile tall has been her job—hands unfettered, shoulders down into it long before the arms, and then the hands follow. It's really in your back, he said. But all she can do today is *nick*—

The heel of the bit is finally into bark—a chip springs forth—pink—a pink chip hops near her, lands. She yanks, pulls, and heaves all at once. The axe—she must liberate the beard from the pine?—no, pine is much softer than this. She must liberate the beard from—him—slide free the hands. Look, he said, no blisters if you do it like this—not like *this*, no—little girl! You don't listen! Listen! She has cal-luses after many years, many earned when he took sick—but not blisters. She circles the axe out behind her, hands unshackled, then up across a shoulder blade and then, Put your back into it, little girl!—a chip leaps off, a chip skips away, lands in the leaves—

oak?

Oak.

Pink. Pink chips fly everywhere.

Think. Like with the chickens. It's not that you shouldn't care, sweetie. It's that you look through your cares, to some larger thing. It's all right to be sad, sweetie. Of course you don't like to hurt things. But look at all of us. Look at us. Your people. Think about what we need.

Put us back on our place, he had said. Put us back on our place.

And then died.



Toward the crest of the hill, a few months later, the truck falters. Already jammed into first gear, it has no bottom left, no torque to yank it on up the narrowing, and narrowing, and rutted, and stony, and bone-dry dusty thing they call a road in these parts.

Jump out! Jenny yells.

Careful, Miss Stewart! yells the driver.

She can't possibly weigh anything that would make a difference! Mrs. Landes says, leaning out the window of her automobile.

Jump! yells Jenny.

The door opens and Miss Stewart steps onto the running board. As she leaps into warm, wet air, the truck grinds *up!* over a rock *lurching* into acceleration a *bit* faster and Miss Stewart *plops* onto her knees by the side of the road.

The truck makes the top of the mountain and jerks to a halt. Mr. Gerhardt wrenches the brake into place and opens his door, twisting a well-used handkerchief from his breast pocket and wiping his face and neck. Mrs. Landes steps from her auto. Mr. Gerhardt glances at her, then lowers his eyes. Jenny has already thrust a hand onto Miss Stewart's shoulder.

Are you hurt, ma'am? Jenny says.

I believe she's hurt not at all, Mr. Gerhardt says tentatively, tossing his eyes toward Mrs. Landes and cramming his hanky back where it came from.

Mrs. Landes glares at him, then turns her annoyance on Jenny.

Good Lord, girl, she says. Were you trying to kill her?

Miss Stewart stands, smacking gravel from her navy skirt.

It's a good thing you weren't wearing your white dress, Mrs. Landes says. It would've been ruined.

I don't wear a white dress, Miss Stewart replies, turning to survey the road down the mountain they'd just summited.

How interesting, Mrs. Landes says.

I understand why you Pennsylvanians wish to do so, but I have a professional reputation to maintain.

Mr. Gerhardt trudges back to his side of the truck.

Do you mean to imply, Mrs. Landes says, that we are provincial?

Of course not, says Miss Stewart. That would be rude. She turns to Jenny. You were utterly correct, dear, she says. I don't know why I didn't think of it myself. We've put enough strain on this poor truck these many miles.

But you're just a little thing, Mrs. Landes says. You can't possibly be the reason—

Well, of course I am, Miss Stewart says. I weigh one hundred thirty if I weigh an ounce. And getting more tremendous every day.

But that's a pittance in proportion to our—our lovely—

Yes, this monstrosity of yours. This . . . *Liberty* Bell that you think will magically win you the vote for women. What in God's name does it weigh?

Somewhat over a thousand pounds, I was told. And it may not win us the vote but it certainly does draw crowds who may then be spoken to on the matter by luminaries such as yourself.

The bell weighs two thousand, Jenny says. And a bit more if you add in the weight of the chain that holds the clapper silent.

Mrs. Landes burns her eyes into Jenny's sunken forehead.

Well, in that case. Miss Stewart leans on the passenger door of the truck. Good driving, Mr. Gerhardt.

Thank you, ma'am, Mr. Gerhardt mutters.

I can see that if the truck had lost momentum it could have rolled backward and murdered poor Mrs. Landes and Miss Hauser.

I highly doubt it, Mrs. Landes says. But I appreciate your concern. May I look at your knees? I think you fell directly on them.

I'm fine, thank you. Now. Where is the rest of your contingent?

The remainder of the honor guard fell behind, Mrs. Landes says. But they'll find us shortly.

Would you care to take a peek at the view? Jenny asks.

That's a very good idea, Mrs. Landes says. Why don't you escort her, Miss Hauser? Mr. Gerhardt and I will await the honor guard in the shade. That is, if you think the air is not too thin, and that your shoes will do.

Don't be silly, Miss Stewart says. I'm from the provinces myself, Mrs. Landes. And these mountains are hardly air-thinning. Hills, really, don't you think? She turns to Jenny. Lead on, Macduff!

Jenny smiles and steps onto the slight grade at the edge of the road. She and Miss Stewart start into what's left of an old pine forest. It didn't used to be, Jenny says, but this is the best view of the valley now.

I can see there's been some cutting here, Miss Stewart says.

When I was a girl, Jenny says, this was thick pine. Nothing but needles. The sun barely cut through.

You're still a girl, my dear, but I can see what you mean. There's little growth come in to replace it yet. That would suggest there was little underbrush, which would suggest a very mature forest.

Yes, ma'am.

Soon they'll start clear-cutting in Montana, ruining us as well with their greed.

Jenny nods.

The women walk quietly through the openings, giving wide berth to saplings—maples, dogwood, oak—the odd beech. Mountain laurel pokes from behind birch, preferring shade, blooms long finished for the year.

At the top of a ridge, they encounter a pile of boulders the size of the truck.

This way please, ma'am, Jenny says.

How do you know this hill so well? Miss Stewart asks. We're many miles from your hamlet, are we not?

A bit over ten mile, ma'am, Jenny replied.

Most of it downhill, I take it.

Yes, ma'am.

Your manners are charming, my dear, but you may cease calling me "ma'am" now. If you must call me something, the correct title is "Dean," although I can't get your leaders to stop calling me "Miss."

"Dean," ma'am?

The man who served in my position previously was called that, yes. I've earned the title. Or you may call me nothing at all. Just don't call me late for dinner.

I believe you probably mean "supper," Dean Stewart.

Dean Stewart smiles.

The women make their way around to the bottom of the boulder pile. Jenny turns to the older woman. I'm afraid we'll have to shimmy up this small one here to have the best sight of things.

Small, dear? Good heavens. This is an alpine slope.

There are good handholds—you can follow and watch what I grab. It's easier, really.

In these shoes?

Dean Stewart stops herself. For God's sake, she says. Don't tell Mrs. Landes I said that.

Jenny looks over her shoulder. It's better in bare feet, ma'am.

Dean Stewart drops to the ground and unlaces a boot. Jenny does the same. The women leave a small pile of boots and stockings, Jenny's larger, and more worn. Up we go? Jenny says.

Onward and upward!

Jenny reaches her right foot up to the well-worn trunk of a blue spruce. Start here, she says, then reach your other foot there.

She places her left foot on an outcropping of the granite ball, and stretches a hand toward the limbs of another spruce. Two more and we're there, she says over her shoulder.

I certainly hope you know how to get down from this wretched thing.

Jenny laughs.

See? Jenny cries from the top. It's nothing!

She reaches her hand down to help the other woman over the last branch of a pine. With the momentum of Jenny's tug, Dean Stewart jumps onto the rock. Please, dear! she cries. Don't call it "nothing"! I shall lose my sense of accomplishment! Surely Mrs. Landes and her ilk have not been to this spot.

Jenny laughs again.

I'll take that as no, and take care to boast about it right away.

Well, Jenny says. Meet your Cumberland Valley.

Turning, Dean Stewart gasps. Emerald reaches, buttressed by garnet—emerald spreads, spills in a sultry haze. Small farms grid the mounds and knolls, bordered by the glint of low creeks in afternoon sun. Bright houses, heavy barns, broad bales of hay speckle the edges of brick-red roads. Dark corn stands surrounded by brown stubble of grain. Beans lope up, down, and around red aisles, potatoes fast behind.

In the center, a town. Steeples stretch, a dome rises from the middle, homes clutter the edge.

In the distance, through air fuzzed with moisture, a long, low ridge hangs below gentle puffs of white.

Good heavens, Dean Stewart breathes.

Crickets and cicadas drone. A robin flies at full velocity onto a maple sapling, then swings forward and back on the fine limb.

I can see why you call it God's country.

Jenny lowers herself onto the boulder. Dean Stewart follows her lead.

Silence, but for the drone.

I would wager that you're capable of sitting here for hours on end.

Jenny nods.

I would wager that you do so frequently.

Drone.

What's that mountain in the distance? The other side of the valley?

South Mountain.

And on the other side of that is . . .

Civilization, some say. But, Gettysburg. York if you head south.

Ah—Gettysburg. Our next stop. And our greatest national disaster.

Guess so. Jenny squints at sky. I heard about worse in these parts.

I'm sure you have. And this is—Blue Mountain.

Yes. The people in town call it North Mountain.

It's all in the angle of perspective, I suppose.

Below the Mason-Dixon Line, they call this same mountain the Blue Ridge.

A rose by any other name . . .

Jenny twists her head to look at Dean Stewart. You talk strange sometimes, she says.

It's called an education, my dear. You must read.

I read.

What do you read? Do you read Shakespeare? Do you read the classics?

How do you know what's a classic?

Excellent! Now that, my friend, is an educated question. Well said. I have no ready answer for that.

The robin takes flight, leaving the sapling tossing in its wake.

And what, Dean Stewart says, is the name of that crazy river down there?

That's Conodoguinet Creek. They say it zigzags for a hundred miles to get to Harrisburg. That's about thirty miles from town as the crow flies.

The Indians must have used it to travel there.

They got tired out if they did.

Drone.

Dean Stewart sits up suddenly. I don't mean to be rude, Miss Hauser, but as your countrymen would have it, "I believe" I asked you a question earlier.

Jenny smiles. Did you? she says.

How do you know this hill so well?

My father brought me here, Jenny says. To hunt.

You're saying your father taught you to hunt?

Yes, ma'am.

Do you like hunting?

No, ma'am. But it's a blessing I know how to do it.

Yes, it's good to be of use to a father. Mostly our brothers seem to own that privilege.

I'm of use to my mother now.

Your father no longer hunts?

He's no longer with us.

Dean Stewart gazes at the bouncing sapling, where the robin has settled again. Of course, she says. I know better than to ask a question like that of people who live in the country. I'm sorry about your father.

Jenny leans back on her hands. He was sick for a while, she says.

A pair of hawks spiral into the sun.

So, Dean Stewart says, you don't like to hunt?

It's not the hunting so much anymore as the cleaning. My mother says I'll never get over it.

You eat everything you kill?

Sometimes that's all there is.

Well, then, Dean Stewart says. You should say thanks to the woods and to your father, and bon appétit to your mother.

Bon app-a-tee?

Eat well.

Jenny lies back and trains her gaze on puffy sky.

Perhaps it's time we got back, Dean Stewart says. Much as I hate to leave this perch.

You'll be down in it soon, Jenny says. It's almost as pretty down

there, but down there you're in it. It's different.

Yes. I would think so.

Jenny leads Dean Stewart down the way they ascended. It seems easier going down, Dean Stewart says. Jenny nods.

The women lace their boots, and head toward the truck.

And beg pardon, ma'am, it's none of my business, but your boater wouldn't look right with a white dress, Jenny says. A hat like that makes you look like a man. People will listen to you more.

I regret to say that you have divined my strategy perfectly. It's sad but true. Appearances matter in such things, and people respond more to female manliness at the podium. Not elsewhere in life, but at the podium.

Do you think they'll pass the law, ma'am?

No, Jenny—may I call you Jenny? I am Mary. Mary Stewart, queen of Scots.

Jenny smiles.

No, Jenny, they will not pass the amendment. There is insufficient motivation for Pennsylvania men to offer women the opportunity to vote them out of office. If Wilson is reelected next year, we may have a better chance with him and his Congress. Europe is at war and he can't possibly insist that democracy reign everywhere *and* deprive women of full participation in democracies.

Why are we bothering with this, then? This is a lot of trouble to go to for nothing.

The women approach the truck.

It won't be for nothing. The single heart we win tonight in your town square will be the foundation for the winning of another heart, and another, and then the nation's heart. We're close upon it. I can feel it. Aren't we, Mrs. Landes?

Mrs. Landes lifts her bulk from under a young oak. Aren't we what, Miss Stewart? Mrs. Landes says.

Dean Stewart, Jenny says swiftly, has been telling me about her plans for getting the right to vote.

And what say you, Miss Stewart?

Dean Stewart, Jenny says swiftly, feels that a national law will happen very soon.

Well, Dean Stewart says kindly, that's a quick summary of my sense of things. It depends upon many dominoes falling into place. I do feel somehow that it will happen soon.

When Pennsylvania passes Amendment One and becomes the first eastern suffrage state, Mrs. Landes says proudly, I feel certain that neighboring states will follow. We can't leave all the fun to your western states, Miss Stewart. Since the victory in Illinois, we're too close to the nation's capital to be ignored.

I'm sure you're right, Mrs. Landes.

Count on it, Miss Stewart—Pennsylvania will be the twelfth suffrage state. I feel it in my bones.

Dean Stewart, Jenny says, wants a national law.

Indeed, Mrs. Landes says. The last amendment in this province failed by only twenty votes. That's close, but likely surmountable. It's the states, Miss Stewart, and especially the great *commonwealths*, that will get you the national vote.

It lost by thirty, Jenny says.

Mrs. Landes bores her gaze into Jenny's eyes.

I work with the states, Dean Stewart says, until my university returns to session and I am needed by the young women of Montana. You needn't trouble yourself about my loyalty to the Pennsylvania Woman Suffrage Association.

Of course not! Mrs. Landes says. In any event, we don't see the National organization as conflicting with our own efforts. Any effort in this cause is appreciated.

The women turn at the sound of a grinding gearbox. Ah! Mrs. Landes says. They're here. Mr. Gerhardt!

Mr. Gerhardt retrieves himself from a near-nap under a solitary pine.

Let's wind her up, Mr. Gerhardt!

At the bottom of the hill, Dean Stewart says, let's get out of the automobiles and proceed as usual—by shanks' pony.

By shanks' pony? Mrs. Landes says.

Is that Shakespeare? Jenny asks.

No, Dean Stewart says laughing, just an expression from the folk in Missoula.

Montana, Jenny muses.

Well, Mrs. Landes says. Of course. If that is your habit. We will escort you.

Do you expect any trouble along the route? Dean Stewart says.

No, Mrs. Landes says.

Yes, Jenny says.

Well, then, Dean Stewart says. We'll be prepared for both.

Mr. Gerhardt fires the ignition. Mrs. Landes snaps her head toward Jenny. Jenny climbs into the automobile.



Jenny with axe hefted overhead. Think. Like with the chickens. It's not that you shouldn't care, sweetie. It's that you look through your cares, to some larger thing. It's all right to feel sad, sweetie. Of course you don't like to hurt things. But look at all of us. Look at us. Your people. Think about what we need.



They descend into the valley breathing the dust elevated by the truck ahead of them, while smothering the honor guard's second automobile with their own.

Mrs. Landes coughs. Jenny stares out the window.

So, Mrs. Landes says. You're a bit full of yourself today, aren't you. Getting all cozy with our guest of honor.

Jenny stares out the window.

Nearer the valley, the pines thicken, harboring dogwood, fern, stretches of May apple beneath. As the automobile gains speed on the final descent, and gears shove down, Jenny watches the green spin beyond her.



Jenny with axe hefted overhead. The crunch bothers her, and the dark—stain—with chickens there's less—drip. But the chase, as if the

damn bird knows she's coming for it and knows what she's thinking so it runs even faster, none of that skittering approach to her when she drops the oats, them shaking their wattles at her, organized in their pecking order, everyone knowing who gets first stab at the oats. If we're good to them, they'll lay, they know we've been good, and eggs keep us fed just as well as the meat of their roosters who screech when I come for them and they know, they know what's coming, they know they're worth less than even that hen over there, the one that's gone broody on us, won't leave the straw I piled up for them, head sunk onto her breast—won't even get up when I get down on my knees and lean out my hand full of mealy bugs, her favorite, she the one who would frisk on over to me when I turned the rock and there they were, those nice juicy worms. But then the rooster getting most of that.

Well, I told her, we *could* use some more chicks if you really can't bring yourself to get up out of that damn nest.

Taking their eggs they don't get so shrill, their call then more like confusion, disappointment, as if I'd put the basket there and when they came back it was gone, where did the eggs go. Mother says I have to help her do the weaving now that he's gone—and they knew—I have less time to mess with them now—I walk in there with my basket and maybe it's just that they know I have no food, so why else could I be there, I am come to take their eggs and some of them, especially the broody ones, come down on me with their beaks, lift their heads high above my searching hands and smack beak down, into my hands searching, and I holler when I should say I'm sorry, probably. Probably that was the right thing.

I'm sorry.

That and maybe I should have shot that damn raccoon that was getting at them, instead of just kicking the dirt up around him and laughing as he dashed away.

Heavens, Mother says. And you're such a good shot.

Well, hell, I told the hens. Look. He died. That's it. No use being silly about it. Doesn't matter how or why or where he is but I have to do this now. His little girl, doing for his. It's the law. It's the rule around here. It's what you do.

And now I do what. Axe, his axe, and me swinging it out and back and up around and then hands loose and down and bit smacks into—I won't kid you. I know what. It's not pine nor oak nor hardwood of any kind. It's neck, spine, chestbone, ribcage, sacrum. It's what makes me sick. Little girl! You got to get the roosters up there faster, little girl—the second you get the neck—hang them up here real good and let it all drain out quick as you can. Otherwise that's it for Sunday dinner and the minister coming again and you know how your mother gets.

But no, I'm not concentrating. Axe out, back up, around and down, and no chip this time, finally we hit pay dirt, finally got through, got a good *crunch*, nothing more spilling out and nothing in there moving any either. Done and over.

Finally. All that's left is to get him stacked up, piece by piece and out of the way.

Jenny with last year's leaves, piling them on top of dirt. Jenny with last year's leaves, kicking last year's leaves over the sticky trail. And him dead and gone.

No trace.



In the heat Mrs. Schneidermann weighs the flannel, a soft cloth of sullen, sooty white, while Jenny fingers bright dresses of linen. Collars high to the throat, waists tight under the ribs, sleeves draped to the elbow. A sign tacked to the wall above the hangers reads "\$4."

Mrs. Schneidermann muttering as Jenny strains to hear: Zwei . . . drei . . . fier. . . . Fier. Nein. Funfzig. Nein. Funf—nein. This in a whisper.

Jenny listens. Jenny fingers the stitching along the hem. An even baste, all but invisible in the filmy fabric. Mrs. Durand, she thinks. No one else capable. Not even Mother.

I could make you an even trade.

Jenny jumps.

Mrs. Schneidermann, Jenny says. You scared me.

Jenny doesn't say, Mrs. Schneidermann, you slink about on these wood planks in your store like a cat, waiting for us to steal a can of—what? Last year's peaches?

Your mother's flannel, finer and finer it gets. The finer she spins the wool, the more we get from the bolt. It'll bring a higher price for me. Four-fifty I can offer you.

Mrs. Schneidermann lifts a sleeve from another of the dresses. It'd be almost an even trade, she says. With some pin money left over for you.

Jenny reaches out a hand and touches a blue sailor's cape that drapes from one of the dresses.

Mrs. Schneidermann drops the sleeve. It's what these—how do you call them—the suffragettes. It's what they'll be wearing when that bell comes in. That silly bell, you heard about it?

Jenny nods.

"Woman's Liberty Bell." Silliness, you asking me.

Jenny draws her finger across the cool cotton.

These women, they that miserable with their men, they ought to do just a bit more work. Work. Idleness is the gateway to unhappiness. Your loom—you know what I'm talking about. You sit. You concentrate. You make. How then will you dislike good, hardworking men so much.

Jenny fingers the tuck on the cape. Mrs. Durand? she asks.

Now *that* a good woman *is*. Yah.

They're rich.

The Durands? Don't be silly, child. She sews and sews to dump nickels on that stool in the taproom he sits. Stupid Scotsman . . .

The suffragettes. They're rich.

They must be, to cast again the Liberty Bell and cart it up and down every hill in this country, for God only knows why.

Ruschenberger paid for it. Mrs. Ruschenberger.

Now *there's* a good Dutch name if I ever heard one. Ruschenberger, yah?

Jenny nods.

Wonder what *her* husband is like. . . . Mrs. Schneidermann clears her throat. You like that dress so much we put you up there on the

truck and you can all over hill and dale the speeches make. Make them vote for that thing, that law of theirs, the name I forget.

Amendment One.

Ammentment One, yah. You we put up there and you can talk about how bad we Dutch girls have it out here in God's country, yah? But for that you need the dress.

Jenny smooths the cape back along the collar and shakes her head. Ten pound, she says. Flour, coffee. Five pound, bacon, sugar.

Yah, well, Mrs. Schneidermann says. When you put it like that, Mrs. Durand's dresses, dear they are. Mighty dear. Your mother stopped milling flour? And she such a hard worker these years. She all right, your mother?

She's fine.

Her flannel—most beautiful I ever seen. Soft. . . . Does she need any cloth, do you think? For her own sewing? It's busy she needs to be, now that your father—yah, busy.

She's good.

Mrs. Schneidermann looks around the store. My potatoes are all, she says. Can you imagine, the winter we had, and no potatoes.

They'll be up soon enough.

And the corn'll be early, I believe. Does she need any seed, do you think?

We don't want to be beholden to you, Mrs. Schneidermann.

Of course not, child, and the best way, too. I wish my *Mr.* Schneidermann had *half* her backbone.

Mrs. Schneidermann drops the five-pound bags on the counter. The rest is out back, she says, and disappears in a rustle of denim skirt.

Jenny exhales. She strolls, until her fingers loiter on a scythe. Blade keen. Keen and satiny, like a well-stropped razor.

Yah, Mrs. Schneidermann says, a bag on each shoulder, good, those are. The men'll be happy in the grain fields this year . . .

Mrs. Schneidermann stands behind the counter and points at each item, moving her lips and adding in her head. Jenny does the same.

I owe you a dollar and two bits, Mrs. Schneidermann says.

Put it toward credit, Jenny says.

Mrs. Schneidermann smiles. Goot, she says.

Jenny tries to smile back as she carries the smaller bags out to the mule. Mrs. Schneidermann follows, the bags rehested to her shoulders.

You the only person around here, the woman says, rides a mule.

Jasper, Jenny says.

Jasper? That his name?

Jenny nods.

Where in the name of heaven did such a name come to you?

I read about a place once, Jenny says. Jasper, Alberta. Way up north. Sounded like a good place.

You and your reading.

Jenny stares at the woman. A bit of flour lingers on one dry cheek. Jenny fights an impulse to smooth the powder away.

Mrs. Schneidermann swats a fly and rubs her cheek as if reading Jenny's mind. I guess, she says. I guess there's nothing wrong with getting books from the schoolteacher's house and learning what you can about places you'll never get to.

Jenny throws a leg up over the mule, who waddles a heavy hip away from her and yanks his head at the bit. He's about to lift his lips and uncurl a roar, she knows. She leans over and whispers in his ear. His head twitches but he settles.

Thank you, Mrs. Schneidermann.

Thank you, Miss Hauser.

Jenny nudges Jasper forward, then out and around the Schneidermanns' automobile. Jasper stumbles around the bumper.

Beg pardon, Mrs. Schneidermann.

Bitte, child. Bitte.



OK, girls! Mrs. Landes calls from the front of the group. An agitated chatter collapses immediately. This is your chance to make history! Are we willing?

A female roar leaps from twenty throats.

Are we able?

Another roar bounds forth.

Mr. Gerhardt, cheeks sunken, stands next to Mrs. Landes by the bell, Dean Stewart's hand on his shoulder.

Well, then, Mr. Gerhardt, let's crank this up! And honor guard! You know what to do with your hands!

Forty index fingers poke the dusk.

That's right, girls! Amendment One! Let's show them what a little dose of female justice can do for our commonwealth!

The truck roars along with the women. Dean Stewart climbs in next to Mr. Gerhardt and Mrs. Landes crowds in next to her.

The parade rolls out at a walking speed, Mrs. Landes daubing the inside corner of her eyes with a hanky.

By the time they're down the mountain, the light is dimming. Except for their drivers, the automobiles are now empty, trundling along after the truck, leading a gaggle of young women. Jenny looks at Mabel Durand's blue linen suit *brat* and smoothes out her own plaid kettlecloth dress. Jenny brings up the rear, can barely see in the dimming of the light the white hanky Mrs. Landes unfurls from her window, like a queen waving at her subjects.

She's waving only at underbrush at first. Pine stands mix with maple and oak, and beech, with thick tangles of rhododendron and fern and vine and prickles that would shred Jenny's dress, she knows, if she stepped off the road. Here the crickets almost drown out Mr. Gerhardt's truck. As they move along, the land thins. Fields roll into pasture and then into stone fences built with the rocks the first people dug out when they cleared them. Ivy tangles over stone walls, crickets heckle as the women follow the road.

It's just light enough for Jenny to make out some of the families sitting at tables in kitchens, or setting on chairs on porches.

Be dark by the time we get there, Jenny thinks. At this pace, lucky to make it by nine.

Won't we be needing good daylight for this thing? Jenny thinks.

The road cuts northwest for a moment.

It's a late start we got. These fussing females can't drive their own damn automobiles.

Yellow sunbeams gouge the road.

Light. Like that.