

FIVE

After breakfast Gamache placed a call to his son in Paris and left a message with the number for the Manoir. Cell phones didn't work this deep into the woods.

The day meandered along pleasantly, the temperature slowly and inexorably climbing until before they realized it it was very hot indeed. Workers dragged Adirondack chairs and chaises longues about the lawns and gardens, seeking shade for their baking guests.

'Spot!'

The shout cut through the humid noon hour and into Armand Gamache's repose.

'Spot!'

'Strange,' said Reine-Marie, taking off her sunglasses to look at her husband, 'it's said with the same inflection you'd yell "Fire!".'

Gamache stuck his finger in his book and looked in the direction of the shout. He was curious to see what a 'Spot' looked like. Did he have floppy ears? Was he actually spotted?

Thomas was calling 'Spot!' and walking swiftly across the

lawn towards a well-dressed tall man with grey hair. Gamache took his sunglasses off and stared more closely.

'This is the end of our peace and quiet, I imagine,' said Reine-Marie, with regret. 'The odious Spot and his even more wretched wife Claire have materialized.'

Gamache put his glasses back on and squinted through them, not really believing what he was seeing.

'What is it?' Reine-Marie asked.

'You'll never guess.'

Two tall figures were converging on the lawn of the Manoir Bellechasse. Distinguished Thomas and his younger brother Spot.

Reine-Marie looked over. 'But that's—'

'I think it is,' he said.

'So where's—' Reine-Marie was flabbergasted.

'I don't know. Oh, there she comes.'

A rumpled figure appeared round the corner of the Manoir, a sun hat imperfectly screwed to her flyaway hair.

'Clara?' whispered Reine-Marie to Gamache. 'My God, Armand, Spot and Claire Finney are Peter and Clara Morrow. It's like a miracle.' She was delighted. The blight that had appeared imminent and unstoppable had turned into their friends.

Now Sandra was greeting Peter and Thomas embraced Clara. She was tiny in his arms and almost disappeared and when she pulled back she was even more dishevelled.

'You look wonderful,' Sandra said, eyeing Clara and happy to see she'd put on weight around her hips and thighs. And was wearing unbecoming striped shorts with a polka-dotted top. And she calls herself an artist, thought Sandra, feeling much better.

'I feel good. And you've lost weight. My God, Sandra, you have to tell me how you did it. I'd love to lose ten pounds.'

'You?' exclaimed Sandra. 'Never.'

The two women walked arm in arm out of the Gamaches' hearing.

'Peter,' said Thomas.

'Thomas,' said Peter.

They nodded brusquely to each other.

'Life good?'

'Never better.'

They spoke in semaphore, all punctuation unnecessary.

'You?'

'Great.'

They'd trimmed the language to its essentials. Before long it would just be consonants. Then silence.

From the dappled shade Armand Gamache watched. He knew he should be delighted to see their old friends, and he was. But looking down he noticed the hairs on his forearms sticking up, and felt a whispered cold breath.

On this shimmering hot summer day, in this pristine and tranquil setting, things were not as they seemed.

Clara made for the stone wall of the *terrasse*, carrying a beer and a tomato sandwich which dripped seeds, unseen, onto her new cotton blouse. She tried to fade into the shade, which wasn't difficult since Peter's family paid little attention to her anyway. She was the daughter-in-law, the sister-in-law, nothing more. At first it had been annoying, but now she found it a great advantage.

She looked out into the perennial garden and noticed if she squinted just so she could believe herself back home in

their little village of Three Pines. It wasn't actually all that far away. Just over the mountain range. But it seemed very distant indeed just now.

Each summer morning at home she'd pour a cup of coffee then walk barefoot down to the Rivière Bella Bella behind their house, sniffing roses and phlox and lilies as she passed. Sitting on a bench in the soft sun she'd sip her coffee and stare into the gently flowing river, mesmerized by the water, glowing gold and silver in the sunshine. Then she'd go into her studio and paint until mid-afternoon. Then she and Peter would get a beer and walk the garden, or join friends at the bistro for a glass of wine. It was a quiet, uneventful life. It suited them.

But one morning a few weeks earlier she'd gone as usual to check their mailbox. And there she'd found the dreaded invitation. The rusty door had shrieked as she'd opened it, and sticking her hand inside she'd known even before she'd seen it what was inside. She could feel the heavy vellum of the envelope. She'd been tempted to just throw it away, toss it in the blue recycling box so it could be turned into something useful, like toilet paper. But she hadn't. Instead she'd stared at the spider writing, the ominous scrawl that made her skin feel as if ants were crawling all over her, until she couldn't stand it any longer. She'd ripped it open, and inside was the invitation to the family reunion at the Manoir Bellechasse at the end of June. A month ahead of normal and just when Three Pines was taking down the Saint-Jean-Baptiste flags and preparing the annual July first Canada Day celebrations on the village green. It was the worst possible timing and she was about to try to get out of it when she remembered she was supposed to organize the children's

games this year. Clara, who got along with children by pretending they were puppies, was suddenly conflicted and decided she'd leave it up to Peter. But there was something else included in the invitation. Something else would happen while they were all there. When Peter came out of his studio that afternoon she'd handed him the envelope and watched his handsome face. This face she loved, this man she longed to protect. And could, against most things. But not his family. They attacked from within, and she couldn't help him there. She saw his face, uncomprehending at first, and then he understood.

It was going to be bad. And yet, to her surprise, he'd picked up the phone and called his mother, and accepted the wretched invitation.

That was a few weeks ago, and now, suddenly, it was upon them.

Clara sat alone on the wall and watched as the rest of them sipped gin and tonics in the blinding sun. None wore sun hats, preferring sunstroke and skin cancer to spectacle. Peter stood talking to his mother, his hand to his brow to block out the sun, as though in a permanent salute.

Thomas looked regal and elegant while Sandra looked alert. Her eyes darted here and there, assessing portions, watching the weaving waiters, monitoring who got what when and how it compared to hers.

On the other side of the *terrasse*, also in the shade, Clara could just see Bert Finney. He seemed to be watching his wife, though it was hard to tell. She looked away just as his pilgrim eye caught hers.

Sipping her cool drink she grabbed a handful of thick hair, wet with perspiration, and peeled it off her neck. Then she

flapped it up and down, to air out the area. Only then did she notice Peter's mother watching, her faded pink and white face crinkled and lovely, her Wedgwood eyes thoughtful and kind. A beautiful English rose inviting you to approach, to bend closer. Too late you'd realize there was a wasp buried deep, waiting to do what wasps do best.

Less than twenty-four hours, she said to herself. *We can leave after breakfast tomorrow.*

A deerfly buzzed around her sweating head and Clara waved her arms so wildly she knocked the rest of her sandwich off the stone wall and into the perennial bed below. The answer to an ant's prayers, except the ones it fell on.

'Claire hasn't changed,' said Peter's mother.

'Neither have you, Mother.'

Peter tried to keep his voice as civil as hers, and felt he'd achieved that perfect balance of courtesy and contempt. So subtle it was impossible to challenge, so obvious it was impossible to miss.

Across the scorching *terrasse* Julia felt her feet begin to burn in their thin sandals on the hot stones.

'Hello, Peter.' She closed her mind to her smouldering feet and crossed the *terrasse*, air-kissing her younger brother. 'You're looking good.'

'So're you.'

Pause.

'Nice weather,' he said.

Julia searched her rapidly emptying brain for something smart to say, something witty and intelligent. Something to prove she was happy. That her life wasn't the shambles she knew he thought it was. Silently she repeated to herself, *Peter's perpetually purple pimple popped*. It helped.

'How's David?' Peter asked.

'Oh, you know him,' said Julia lightly. 'He adjusts to anything.'

'Even prison? And here you are.'

She searched his placid handsome face. Was that an insult? She'd been away from the family so long she was out of practice. She felt like a long retired parachutist suddenly tossed out of a plane.

Four days ago, when she'd arrived, she'd been hurt and exhausted. The last smile, the last empty compliment, the last courtesy wrung from her in the disaster that had been the last year, during David's trial. Feeling betrayed, humiliated and exposed, she'd come back home to heal. To this cosy mother and the tall, handsome brothers of her magical, mystical memory. Surely they'd take care of her.

Somehow she'd forgotten why she'd left them in the first place. But now she was back and was remembering.

'Imagine,' said Thomas, 'your husband stealing all that money, and you not knowing. It must have been horrible.'

'Thomas,' said his mother, shaking her head slightly. Not in rebuke for the insult to Julia but for saying it in front of the staff. Julia felt the hot stones sizzling beneath her feet. But she smiled and held her ground.

'Your father,' Mrs Finney began, then stopped.

'Go on, Mother,' said Julia, feeling something old and familiar swish its tail deep inside her. Something decades dormant was stirring. 'My father?'

'Well, you know how he felt.'

'How did he feel?'

'Really, Julia, this is an inappropriate conversation.' Her mother turned her pink face to her. It was said with the tender

smile, the slight flutter of those hands. How long had it been since she'd felt her mother's hands?

'I'm sorry,' said Julia.

'Jump, Bean, jump!'

Clara turned and watched as Peter's youngest sister leapt across the manicured lawn, feet barely touching the ground, and behind her ran Bean, beach towel tied at the neck, laughing. But not jumping. Good ol' Bean, thought Clara.

'Whew,' puffed Mariana, stepping onto the *terrasse* moments later, sweat pouring off her as though she'd run through a sprinkler. She took a corner of a scarf and wiped her eyes. 'Did Bean jump?' she asked the family. Only Thomas reacted, with a dismissive smirk.

Clara's bra itched in the heat and humidity. She reached down and tugged it. Too late, she looked over. Peter's mother was again watching, as though equipped with a special radar.

'How's your art?'

The question took Clara by surprise. She'd assumed it to be directed at Peter, and had occupied herself by trying to pick off the tomato seeds now baked to her breasts.

'Me?' She looked up into Julia's face. The sister she knew the least. But she'd heard the stories from Peter and was quick to put up her guard. 'Oh, you know. Always a struggle.'

It was the easy answer, the one they expected. Clara the failure, who called herself an artist but never sold. Who did ridiculous works like mannequins with bouffant hair and melting trees.

'I remember hearing about your last show. Quite a statement.'

Clara sat up straighter. She knew many people managed to ask the first, polite question. But it was the rare person who asked a second.

Perhaps Julia was sincere.

'Warrior Uteruses, wasn't it?' asked Julia. Clara searched her face for ridicule but found none.

Clara nodded. True, by economic measurements the series couldn't be considered a success, but emotionally it had been a triumph. She'd considered giving a Warrior Uterus to Peter's mother as a Christmas gift, but decided that might be a step too far.

'Didn't we tell you?' Peter walked over, smiling. Never a good sign at a family reunion. The more devious they got the more they smiled. Clara tried to catch his eye.

'Tell us what?' Sandra asked, sensing something unpleasant approaching.

'About Clara's art.'

'I'd like another beer,' said Clara. No one paid any attention.

'What about it?' asked Thomas.

'Nothing,' said Clara. 'Just lots of crap. You know me. Always experimenting.'

'She's been approached by a gallery.'

'Peter,' Clara snapped. 'I don't think we need to talk about it.'

'But I'm sure they'd like to hear,' said Peter. He took his hand out of his slacks pocket and it turned inside out, marring his otherwise perfect appearance.

'Clara's modest. The Galerie Fortin in Montreal wants to do a one-woman show. Denis Fortin himself came to Three Pines to see her work.'

Silence.

Clara's nails dug into her palms. A deerfly found the tender pale skin behind her ear, and bit.

'Marvellous,' said Peter's mother to Clara. 'I'm absolutely delighted.'

Clara, surprised, turned to her mother-in-law. She could barely believe her ears. Had she been too harsh all this time? Judged Peter's mother unfairly?

'So often they're too thick.'

Clara's smile faltered. Too thick?

'And not made with real mayonnaise. But Chef Véronique has outdone herself again. Have you tried the cucumber sandwiches, Claire? They're really very good.'

'They are good,' agreed Clara with maniacal enthusiasm.

'Congratulations, Clara. What good news.' The voice was masculine, jovial and vaguely familiar. '*Félicitations.*'

Across the lawn a powerfully built middle-aged man in a funny hat took easy strides towards them. Beside him was a small, elegant woman wearing the same floppy sun hat.

'Reine-Marie?' Clara peered, hardly believing her eyes. 'Peter, is that Reine-Marie?'

Peter was staring almost slack-jawed as the couple hurried up the steps.

'Oh, Clara, what wonderful news,' said Reine-Marie, taking her friend in her arms. Clara smelled Joy, the fragrance by Jean Patou, and felt the same way. It was like being saved from torture at the last moment. She pulled back from the embrace and stared at Reine-Marie Gamache, to make certain. Sure enough, the smiling woman was there. Clara could still feel the glares behind her, but it didn't matter as much. Not now.

Then Armand kissed her on both cheeks and squeezed her arm affectionately. 'We're thrilled for you. And Denis Fortin.' He looked into the fieldstone faces on the *terrasse*.

'He's' art dealer in Montreal, as you probably know.
A real

'Peter's mother managed to sound both dismissive and loving. As though Clara's coup was unseemly. And only this display of emotion, of elation, was unseemly. This was a rude interruption of a private family affair, perhaps worst of all, unmistakable evidence that Peterized with the people from the broom closet. It was only to play bridge when stuck in a remote lodge with that was simply being well bred. But it was quite something to choose their company.

Gamache walked over to Peter and shook his hand. 'Hello, old son,

Gamache was smiling and Peter stared as though at something extraordinary.

'Ah! But how in the world did you come to be here?'

'It's an inn after all.' Gamache laughed. 'We're here celebrating our anniversary.'

'Oh God,' said Clara and stepped towards Reine-Marie. Reine-Marie also made to move towards them but the clear small throat behind him stopped his progress.

'Perhaps we can talk later,' suggested Reine-Marie. 'You need with your charming family.' She gave Clara a notick hug. Clara was reluctant to let go, but did, and as the Gamaches strolled across the lawn towards the lake. She felt a trickle down her neck. Reaching up to wipe the sweat away she was surprised to see blood on her forehead.

SIX

Finally, after a luncheon that lasted a thousand years, Clara was able to get away, and the first thing she wanted to do was go on the hunt for the Gamaches.

'I think Mother would prefer us to stay here.' Peter hovered on the stone *terrasse*.

'Come on.' She gave him a conspiratorial look and held out her hand. 'Be daring.'

'But it's a family reunion.' Peter longed to go with her. To take her hand and race across the perfect lawn, and find their friends. Over lunch, while the rest of the family either ate in silence or discussed the stock market, Peter and Clara had whispered urgently and excitedly about the Gamaches.

'You should've seen your face,' said Peter, trying to keep his voice down. 'You looked like Dorothy meeting the Great and Powerful Oz. All stunned and excited.'

'I think you're spending way too much time with Olivier and Gabri,' said Clara, smiling. She'd never actually smiled at a family reunion before. It felt odd. 'Besides, you looked like the Tin Man, all stunned. Can you believe the Gamaches

are here? Can we sneak away and spend some time with them this afternoon?’

‘I don’t see why not,’ said Peter, hiding behind a warm bun. The prospect of killing a few hours with their friends instead of enduring the family was a great relief.

Clara had looked at her watch. Two p.m. Twenty more hours. If she went to bed at eleven and woke up at nine tomorrow morning that would leave just – she tried to work it out in her head – eleven more waking hours with Peter’s family. She could just about make it. And two hours with the Gamaches, that left just nine hours. Dear Lord, she could almost see the end coming. Then they could return to their little village of Three Pines, until another invitation arrived, next year.

Don’t think about that.

But now Peter hesitated on the *terrasse*, as she secretly knew he would. Even over lunch she’d known he couldn’t do it. Still, it had been fun to pretend. Like playing emotional dress-up. Pretending to be the brave one this time.

But in the end, of course, he couldn’t do it. And Clara couldn’t leave him. And so she walked slowly back inside.

‘Why’d you tell your family about my solo show?’ she asked Peter, and wondered if she was trying to pick a fight with him. To punish him for making them stay.

‘I thought they should know. They’re always so dismissive of your work.’

‘And you’re not?’ She was pissed off.

‘How can you say that?’ He looked hurt, and she knew she’d said it to wound. She waited for him to point out that he’d supported her all these years. He’d put a roof over their heads and bought the food. But he stayed silent, which annoyed her even more.

As he turned to face her she noticed a small dot of whipped cream, like a whitehead, on his cheek. It might as well have been an aeroplane, so odd was it to see anything unplanned attached to her husband. He was always so splendid, so beautifully turned out. His clothes never wrinkled, the creases crisp, never a stain nor a fault. What was that thing on *Star Trek*? The tractor beam? No, not that. The shields. Peter went through life with his shields raised, repulsing attack by food or beverage, or people. Clara wondered whether there was a tiny Scottish voice in his head right now screaming, ‘*Cap’n, the shields are down. I canna git them up.*’

But Peter, dear Peter, was oblivious of the small, fluffy, white alien attached to his face.

She knew she should say something, or at least wipe it off, but she was fed up.

‘What’s wrong?’ Peter asked, looking both concerned and a little afraid. Confrontation petrified him.

‘You told your family about the Fortin gallery to annoy them. Especially Thomas. It had nothing to do with me. You used my art as a weapon.’

Cap’n, she’s breakin’ up.

‘How can you say that?’

But he sounded unsure, something else she rarely heard.

‘Please don’t talk about my art with them again. In fact, don’t mention anything personal at all. They don’t care and it just hurts me. Probably shouldn’t, but it does. Can you do that?’

She noticed his slacks pocket was still inside out. It was one of the most disconcerting things she’d ever seen.

‘I’m sorry,’ he finally said. ‘But it wasn’t Thomas, you know. Not any more. I think I’ve grown used to him. It was Julia. Seeing her again has thrown me.’

'She seems nice enough.'

'We all do.'

'Twenty more hours,' said Clara, looking at her watch then reaching up and rubbing the whipped cream off his face.

On their way up the footpath the Gamaches heard a voice calling to them, and stopped.

'There you are,' puffed Madame Dubois, holding a basket of herbs from the garden. 'I left a note at the front desk. Your son called from Paris. Said he'd be out this evening, but he'll try again.'

'*Quel dommage*,' said Gamache. 'We'll connect eventually. *Merci*. May I carry that?' He put out his hand for the basket and after a small hesitation the innkeeper handed it to him gratefully.

'It is getting hot,' she said, 'and I find the humidity wearying.' She turned and started up the path at a pace that flabbergasted the Gamaches.

'Madame Dubois.' Gamache found himself chasing after a woman in her mid-120s. 'We have a question.'

She stopped and waited for him.

'We were wondering about the marble cube.'

'What marble cube?'

'Pardon?' he said.

'Pardon?' said Madame Dubois.

'That big box of marble down there, on the other side of the Manoir. I saw it last night and then again this morning. Your young gardener doesn't know what it's for and Pierre told us to ask you.'

'Ah, *oui*, that marble box,' she said as if there were others.

'Well, we're very lucky. We're . . .' and she mumbled something then headed off.

'I didn't hear what you said.'

'Oh. All right.' She behaved as though they'd tortured her for the information. 'It's for a statue.'

'A statue? Really?' Reine-Marie asked. 'Of what?'

'Of Madame Finney's husband.'

Armand Gamache saw Bert Finney in marble in the middle of their beloved gardens at Manoir Bellechasse. Forever. His wretched face etched in stone and watching them, or God knows what, for eternity.

Their faces must have alerted Madame Dubois.

'Not this one, of course. The first one. Charles Morrow. I knew him, you know. A fine man.'

The Gamaches, who really hadn't given it much thought, suddenly understood a great deal. How Spot Finney had become Peter Morrow. His mother had married again. She'd gone from Morrow to Finney, but no one else had. In their minds they'd been thinking of them all as Finneys, but they weren't. They were Morrows.

That might explain, at least in part, how a reunion to celebrate Father seemed to ignore Bert Finney.

'Charles Morrow died quite a few years ago,' Clementine Dubois continued. 'Heart. The family's holding a little unveiling later this afternoon, just before the cocktail hour. The statue's arriving in about an hour. He'll make a wonderful addition to the garden.'

She looked at them furtively.

By the size of the marble pedestal the statue would be enormous, Gamache guessed. Taller than some of the trees,

though happily the trees would grow and presumably the statue wouldn't.

'Have you seen the sculpture?' Gamache asked, trying to make it sound casual.

'Oh, yes. Enormous thing. Naked, of course, with flowers around his head and little wings. They were fortunate to find red marble.'

Gamache's eyes widened and brows rose. Then he caught her smile.

'You wretched woman,' he laughed, and she chuckled.

'Do you think I'd do that to you? I love this place,' Madame Dubois said, as they walked her the rest of the way back to the swinging screen door into the cool Manoir. 'But it's getting so expensive to run. We needed a new furnace this year, and the roof will soon need redoing.'

The Gamaches tilted their heads back to look at the copper roof, oxidized green over time. Even looking at it gave Gamache vertigo. He'd never make a roofer.

'I've spoken to an Abinaki craftsman about doing the work. You know it was the Abinaki who built the Manoir to begin with?'

'No, I didn't,' said Gamache, who loved Quebec history. 'I assumed it was done by the Robber Barons.'

'Paid for by them, but built by the natives and the Québécois. Used to be a hunting and fishing lodge. When my husband and I bought it fifty years ago it was abandoned. The attic was filled with stuffed heads. Looked like an abattoir. Disgraceful.'

'You were wise to accept the Finneys' proposal.' He smiled. 'And their money. Better to have Charles Morrow in the garden and the repairs done than lose everything.'

'Let's hope he isn't naked. I haven't seen the statue.'

The Gamaches watched as she walked towards the kitchen.

'Well, at least the birds'll have one more thing to perch on,' said Gamache.

'At least,' said Reine-Marie.

The Gamaches found Peter and Clara on the wharf when they went down for a swim.

'Now, tell us what's been happening in your lives, starting with Denis Fortin and your art.' Reine-Marie patted the Adirondack chair. 'And don't leave out a thing.'

Peter and Clara brought them up to date on events in their village of Three Pines, then, after some more prompting, Clara told the story of the great art dealer showing up to their modest home there, his return visit with his partners, then the excruciating wait while they decided if Clara Morrow was, at the age of forty-eight, an emerging artist. Someone they wanted to sponsor. For everyone in the art world knew that if Denis Fortin approved of you, the art world approved. And anything was possible.

Then the nearly unbelievable news that after decades of trying to get someone, anyone, to notice her work, Clara was indeed going to have a solo show at the Galerie Fortin next year.

'And how are you feeling about this?' Gamache asked quietly, having left the women and wandered to the end of the dock with Peter.

'Wonderful.'

Gamache nodded and putting his hands behind his back he looked out to the far shore, and waited. He knew Peter Morrow. Knew him to be a decent and kind man, who loved his wife

more than anything in the world. But he also knew Peter's ego was almost as large as his love. And that was enormous.

'What?' Peter laughed, after the silence had stretched beyond his breaking.

'You're used to being the successful one,' said Gamache simply. No use pretending. 'It would be natural to feel a little . . .' he searched for the right word, the kind word, 'murderous.'

Peter laughed again and was surprised to hear it magnified by the far shore.

'You do know artists. I've had a bit of a struggle over this, as I think you know, but seeing Clara so happy, well . . .'

'I'm not sure Reine-Marie would be pleased if I became a librarian, like her,' said Gamache, looking over at his wife talking animatedly with Clara.

'I can just see both of you working at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Montreal, seething resentments between the aisles. Especially if you got promoted.'

'That wouldn't happen. I can't spell. Have to sing the alphabet every time I look a number up in the phone book. Drives Reine-Marie crazy. But you want murderous feelings? Hang around librarians,' confided Gamache. 'All that silence. Gives them ideas.'

They laughed and as they walked back to the women they heard Reine-Marie describe the rest of their day.

'Swim, nap, swim, white wine, dinner, swim, sleep.'

Clara was impressed.

'Well, we've had all week to perfect it,' admitted Reine-Marie. 'You have to work on these things. What're you two doing?'

'Boating, unveiling, getting drunk, humiliating myself,

apologizing, sulking, eating, sleeping,' said Clara. 'I've had twenty years of reunions to perfect it. Though the unveiling is new.'

'It's a statue of your father?' Gamache asked Peter.

'The pater. Better here than our garden.'

'Peter,' said Clara mildly.

'Would you want it?' asked Peter.

'No, but I didn't really know your father. He was handsome enough, like his son.'

'I'm not at all like him,' snapped Peter in a tone so unlike him it surprised the others.

'You didn't like your father?' Gamache asked. It seemed a safe guess.

'I liked him about as much as he liked me. Isn't that how it normally works? You get what you give? That's what he always said. And he gave nothing.'

There was silence then.

'After Peter's father died his mother married again,' explained Clara. 'Bert Finney.'

'A clerk in my father's company,' said Peter, tossing pebbles into the calm lake.

He was slightly more than a clerk, Clara knew. But she also knew it wasn't the time to fine-tune her husband.

'I'll just be glad when this is over. Mother doesn't want us to see the statue until the unveiling so Thomas suggested we all go boating.' He cocked his head towards a green wooden rowboat tied to the dock. It was unusually long with two sets of oar holes.

'It's a *verchère*,' said Reine-Marie, amazed. She hadn't seen one in years.

'That's right,' said Peter. 'We used to go in the seven-in-a-*verchère* race at the local regatta. Thomas thought it would be a good way to pass the time. A sort of homage to Father.'

'Thomas calls you Spot,' said Gamache.

'Has most of my life.' Peter held out his hands. Reine-Marie and Gamache bent over, as though preparing to kiss a ring. But instead of a ring they found dots. Spots.

'Paint,' said Reine-Marie, straightening up. 'Turpentine'll get that out.'

'Really?' asked Peter with mock astonishment, then smiled. 'These are new. From this morning in the studio. But I've had them on my hands, my face, my clothing, my hair, all my life. When I was a kid Thomas noticed and started calling me Spot.'

'Nothing gets by Thomas, I'm guessing,' said Gamache.

'He's the original recycler,' agreed Peter. 'He collects conversations and events then uses them years later, against you. Recycle, retaliate, repulse. Nothing's ever wasted with our Thomas.'

'So that explains Spot,' said Reine-Marie. 'But what about your sister Mariana? Why is she Magilla?'

'Oh, some TV show she used to watch as a kid. *Magilla Gorilla*. She was fixated on it. Father used to get home from work right in the middle of the show and insist we all greet him at the door, like a big happy family. Mariana was always in the basement, watching TV. He'd have to yell at her. Every night she'd stomp up those stairs, crying.'

'So Thomas called her Magilla, after a gorilla?' Gamache was beginning to get a sense of the man. Peter nodded.

'And what did you call him?'

'Thomas. I was always the creative one in the family.'

They sat enjoying the slight breeze at the dock. Peter

listened as Clara talked again about Fortin visiting her studio this past spring and seeing the portrait of their friend Ruth, the old and withered poet. Embittered and embattled and brilliant. For some reason Peter couldn't hope to understand Clara had painted her as the Madonna. Not, of course, the dewy virgin. But an old and forgotten woman, alone and frightened and facing her final years.

It was the most beautiful work Peter had ever seen, and he'd stood in front of masterpieces. But never had he seen anything more extraordinary than in Clara's small back studio, cramped with rejected pieces and magazines and curled and crisp orange rinds, next to his pristine, professional, disciplined space.

But while he'd once again taken a common item and gotten so close it was unrecognizable then painted it as an abstract and called it *The Curtain*, or *Blade of Grass*, or *Transport*, Clara had squirrelled away in her little space and captured the divine in the face of their wizened, shrivelled, vicious old neighbour. Veined old hands clutched a faded blue robe to her withered neck. Her face was full of misery and disappointment, rage and despair. Except her eyes. It wasn't obvious. Just a hint, a suggestion.

It was there, in the tiniest dot in her eye. In the entire, huge canvas, Clara had painted a single dot, a spot. And in that spot she'd placed hope.

It was exquisite.

He was happy for her. Really.

A shriek broke into their reflections and in an instant all were on their feet turning towards the Manoir. Armand Gamache started forward just as a small figure shot out of the garden.

Bean.

The child raced screaming towards them down the lawn getting more hysterical with each panicked step, the swim towel snapping behind. And someone was chasing the child. As they came closer Gamache recognized the young gardener.

Peter and Clara, Gamache and Reine-Marie ran onto the lawn and put their arms out to stop Bean, who seemed strangely intent on avoiding them, but Peter caught the fugitive.

'Let me down,' Bean wailed and struggled in his arms, as though Peter was the threat. Wild eyed, the child looked back at the Manoir.

The lawn was filled with people, the Morrows, the Finneys and some of the staff following the now trotting gardener.

'Who are you running from, Bean?' Gamache quickly knelt down and took the child's trembling hands. 'Look at me, now,' he said kindly but firmly, and Bean did. 'Has someone hurt you?'

He knew he had until the others joined them to get an honest answer from Bean, and they were almost there. His eyes never left the frightened child.

Bean held out an arm. Welts were appearing on the tender skin.

'What have you done to my grandchild?'

It was too late. They'd arrived and Gamache looked up into the accusing face of Irene Finney. She was a formidable woman, Gamache knew. He admired, respected, trusted strong women. He'd been raised by one, and had married one. But he knew strength wasn't hardness, and a formidable woman and a bully were two different things. Which was she?

He looked at the elderly woman now, stern, unbending, demanding an answer.

'Get away from Bean,' she commanded, but Gamache stayed kneeling, ignoring her.

'What happened?' he quietly asked the child.

'It wasn't my fault,' he heard behind him and turned to see the young gardener standing there.

'That normally means it was,' said Mrs Finney.

'Irene, let the girl speak. What's your name?' Bert Finney spoke softly.

'Colleen,' said the gardener, edging away from the wild-looking old man. 'It was wasps.'

'It was bees,' snuffled Bean. 'I was riding round Olympus when they got me.'

'Olympus?' snapped Mrs Finney.

'The marble block,' said Colleen. 'And it was wasps, not bees. The kid doesn't know the difference.'

Gamache knelt down and held out his large hand. Bean hesitated, and while the family argued over the difference between bees and wasps he examined the three welts. They were red and warm to the touch. Peering closer he could see the stingers stuck under the skin, with small poison sacs attached.

'Can you get some calamine lotion?' he asked a member of the staff, who sprinted back up the lawn.

Holding Bean's arm firmly he quickly removed all the stingers and sacs, then watched for an allergic reaction, ready to scoop the child up and race for his car and the Sherbrooke Hospital. He looked over at Reine-Marie, who was obviously watching for the same thing.

Once a parent.

The arm remained angry but not lethal.

Reine-Marie took the bottle of peach-coloured liquid and kissing the welts first she dabbed the lotion on then straightened up. All around them the family was now arguing over whether calamine lotion really worked.

'The excitement's over,' declared Mrs Finney. Looking around she noticed the rowboat and walked towards the dock. 'Now, who'll sit where?'

After much discussion Peter and Thomas started hauling Morrows into the *verchère*. Peter stood in the boat and Thomas stood on the dock and between them they sat Mrs Finney, Mariana and Julia. Bean crawled carefully into the boat without help.

'My turn,' said Sandra, putting her arm out. Thomas handed her to Peter.

Clara stepped forward and reached for Peter, who hesitated.

'Excuse me,' said Thomas, and stepped beside Clara then into the *verchère*. Thomas sat and the entire boat stared at Peter, standing in front of the only seat left.

'Sit down before you tip us all,' said Mrs Finney.

Peter sat.

Clara lowered her arms. In the reflection of the water she saw the ugliest man alive standing beside her.

'Not everyone makes the boat,' said Bert Finney as the *verchère* left the dock.

SEVEN

I didn't really want to go, you know,' said Clara, not looking at Reine-Marie. 'But I said I would because it seemed important to Peter. This is probably better.'

'Will you join us, sir?' Gamache walked up to Bert Finney, also looking out at the lake. Finney turned and stared at Gamache. It was a disconcerting look, not only because of his forbidding face and odd eyes but because people so rarely stared that openly for that long. Gamache held the stare and finally Finney's lips parted and his disarray of yellow teeth showed in what might have been a smile.

'No, *merci*. I believe I'll stay here.' He walked to the end of the dock. 'Seven mad Morrows in a *verchère*. What could possibly go wrong?'

Gamache took his floppy hat off and felt the full force of the sun. He couldn't remember a hotter day. It was stifling now. There was no breeze, nothing stirred, and the sun beat down on them relentlessly, bouncing off and magnified by the lake. Perspiration had plastered his fresh shirt to his skin. He offered the hat to the old man.

Very slowly Bert Finney turned round as though he was afraid of capsizing. Then an old hand, like twigs stripped of bark, reached out and held the gaily patterned sun hat.

'It's your sun bonnet. You need it.'

'I prefer to think of it as my helmet,' said Gamache, letting go of the hat. 'And you need it more.'

Finney chuckled and held the hat, his fingers stroking it slightly. 'A sun helmet. I wonder who the enemy is?'

'The sun?'

'That would be it, I suppose.' But he seemed unconvinced and nodding to Gamache he put the hat on his satellite head and turned back to the lake.

An hour later Peter joined them in the garden, his face red from sunburn, Clara was pleased to see. She'd decided to play it cool. Not show how she felt.

Gamache handed him a cold beer, ice slipping off the sides. Peter held it to his red face and rolled it on his chest.

'Have fun?' Clara asked. 'Get caught up with the family?'

'It wasn't too bad,' said Peter, sipping the drink. 'We didn't sink.'

'You think not?' said Clara and stomped away. Peter stared at Gamache then ran after her, but as he neared the Manoir he noticed a huge canvas blanket that seemed to hover in the air.

The statue had arrived. His father had arrived. Peter slowed to a stop, and stared.

'For God's sake, you can't even leave your family long enough to chase me,' yelled Clara from the other side of the Manoir, no longer caring that she was proving all the Morrow suspicions true. She was unstable, emotional, hysterical. Mad. But so were they.

Seven mad Morrows.

'God, Clara, I'm sorry. What can I say?' he said when he caught up with her. Clara was silent. 'I'm really fucking up today. What can I do to make this better?'

'Are you kidding? I'm not your mother. You're fifty and you want me to tell you how to make this better? You fucked it up, you figure it out.'

'I'm so sorry. My family's nuts. I probably should've told you sooner.'

He smiled so boyishly it would have melted her heart had it not turned to marble. There was silence.

'That's it?' she said. 'That's your apology?'

'I don't know what to do,' he said. 'I wish I did.'

He stood there, lost. As he always was when she was angry.

'I'm so sorry,' he repeated. 'There wasn't room in the boat.'

'When will there be?'

'I don't understand.'

'You could have left. Joined me.'

He stared at her as though she'd told him he could have sprouted wings and flown. She could see that. For Peter it was demanding the impossible. But she also believed Peter Morrow was capable of flight.

EIGHT

The unveiling ceremony was short and dignified. The Morrows sat in a semicircle facing the canvas-draped statue. It was late afternoon and the trees cast long shadows. Sandra batted a bee towards Julia who passed it on to Mariana.

Gamache and Reine-Marie sat under the huge oak tree next to the lodge, watching from a respectful distance. The Morrows dabbed dry eyes and moist brows.

Clementine Dubois, who'd been standing beside the statue, handed Irene Finney a rope and mimed a tugging movement.

The Gamaches leaned forward but the Morrows leaned, almost imperceptibly, away. There was a pause. Gamache wondered whether Mrs Finney was hesitant to pull the canvas caul off the statue. To reveal and release her first husband.

The elderly woman gave a tug. Then another. It was as though Charles Morrow was clinging on to the canvas. Unwilling to be revealed.

Finally, with a yank, the canvas fell away.
There was Charles Morrow.

All through the dinner service the statue was the talk of the kitchen. Chef Véronique tried to calm the giddy staff and get them to focus on the orders, but it was difficult. Finally, in a quiet moment, as she stirred the reduction for the lamb and Pierre stood beside her arranging the dessert service, she spoke to him.

'What's it look like?' she whispered, her voice deep and mellow.

'Not what you'd expect. You haven't seen it?'

'No time. Thought I might sneak a peek later tonight. Was it very awful? The kids seem spooked.'

She glanced at the young waiters and kitchen staff, huddled in small groups, some talking excitedly, others wide eyed and hushed as though sharing ghost stories around a campfire. And scaring each other silly, thought Pierre.

'*Bon*, that's enough.' He clapped his hands. 'Back to work.'

But he made sure to sound reassuring, not harsh.

'I swear it moved,' came a familiar voice from one of the groups. Pierre turned and saw Elliot, surrounded by other workers. They laughed. 'No, I'm serious.'

'Elliot, that's enough,' he said. 'Statues don't move and you know it.'

'Of course you're right,' said Elliot. But his tone was sly and condescending, as though the *maître d'* had said something slightly stupid.

'Pierre,' whispered Chef Véronique behind him.

He managed to smile. 'You haven't been smoking the napkins again, have you, young man?'

The others laughed and even Elliot smiled. Soon the maître d's squadron of waiters was out of the swinging door, crisply delivering food and sauces, bread and wine.

'Well done,' said Chef Véronique.

'Goddamned Elliot. Sorry,' said the maître d', shooting her an apologetic look. 'But he's deliberately scaring the others.'

She was surprised to see his hands tremble as he poured fresh sugar into a bone china bowl.

'Do we have enough now?' She nodded to the empty sugar sack in his hand.

'Plenty. Strange that we ran out. You don't think . . .'

'What? Elliot? Why would he?'

The maître d' shrugged. 'When something strange happens you can be sure he's behind it.'

Chef Véronique didn't disagree. They'd seen a lot of kids come and go over the years. Had trained hundreds. But there was only one Elliot.

He cares so deeply for the kids, she thought as she watched Pierre. As though they were his own. And she wondered, not for the first time, how much he missed being a father himself. He'd have been a good one. He gave these kids training and guidance. But even more than that, he gave them a stable environment and a kind home. In the middle of nowhere, they found what they needed. Good food, a warm bed and solid ground beneath their feet. Pierre had given up having his own children in exchange for a home in the wilderness and caring for other people and other people's children. They both had. But after almost thirty years had Pierre finally been pushed too far by one of them? Chef Véronique loved nature, and found plenty

of time to study it, and she knew that sometimes something unnatural crawled out of the womb, out of the woods. She thought of Elliot, and wondered whether the charming, handsome young man was all, or perhaps more than, he appeared.

'What did you think of the statue?' Reine-Marie asked as they sipped their after-dinner espressos and cognacs on the lawn, the night broken only by a firefly flickering here and there. The Morrows were still inside, eating in near silence, and the Gamaches had the rest of the world to themselves.

Gamache thought a moment. 'I was amazed.'

'So was I,' she said, gazing over to where it stood. But the night was dark and she couldn't see the gaunt, weary face of Charles Morrow. A handsome man, gone to stone.

The wind had picked up steadily since the unveiling. But instead of being refreshing, the breeze seemed to drag even more heat and humidity with it.

Bach wafted from the open windows of the Great Room.

Armand loosened his tie. 'There. That's better. Did you see that?'

He pointed down the lake, though he didn't have to. In a night this dark the lightning was impossible to miss.

'Fork,' said Reine-Marie. 'Pierre was right. Storm's coming.'

Her husband was moving his lips, whispering numbers, counting the space between light and sound. And then, in the distance, a low rumbling. It built then broke, and rumbled some more.

'Long way off still,' he said. 'Might even miss us. Storms get caught in valleys sometimes.'

But he didn't think this storm would miss them. Soon all that was calm and peaceful would be disrupted.

'Paradise lost,' he murmured.

'The mind is its own place, monsieur,' said Reine-Marie. 'Can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven. This is heaven. Always will be.'

'This place? Manoir Bellechasse?'

'No.' She put her arms around him. 'This place.'

'Please take this in to the Great Room.' Pierre handed a silver tray with coffee, a Drambuie and chocolates to a waiter. 'It's for Madame Martin.'

'Here, I'll trade you. I'll take that.' At the door Elliot reached for the tray. 'I saw her go in the garden for a smoke. You can take mine. It's for Mrs Morrow.'

'The wild-haired one?' the waiter asked hopefully.

'No, the deflated one,' admitted Elliot. 'Sandra Morrow.' Seeing the other waiter's expression he lowered his voice. 'Listen, I know where Mrs Martin goes for a smoke. You'll be wandering all over trying to find her.'

'How d'you know where she goes?' the other waiter whispered.

'I just know.'

'Come on, man. I'm not going to take that to Mrs Morrow. She'll make me come back for more chocolates, or different chocolates, or a bigger coffee. Screw off.'

The waiter held on to his tray and Elliot reached for it.

'What's going on? Why're you both still here?'

They looked up and the maître d' was beside them. His eyes dropped to their hands, all four of them clasping the single silver tray for Julia Martin. In the background Chef

Véronique stopped arranging a tray with miniature *pâtisserie* and watched.

'Elliot, isn't that your tray?' The maître d' nodded to the tray sitting on the old pine sideboard.

'What's the big deal? We're just trading.'

'No we're not,' said the other waiter, yanking the tray away and spilling some coffee.

'That's it, that's enough. Get a fresh tray and coffee,' Pierre ordered the waiter, 'and you come with me.'

He took Elliot into a far corner of the kitchen. They couldn't escape the darting stares, but they could escape the ears.

'What's this about? Is there something going on between you and Madame Martin?'

'No, sir.'

'Then why cause this commotion?'

'I just can't stand Mrs Morrow, that's all.'

Pierre hesitated. He could understand that. He didn't much like her either. 'She's still our guest. We can't just serve the ones we like.' He smiled at the young man.

'Yes, sir.' But Elliot didn't smile back.

'Bon,' said Pierre. 'I'll take that.'

He took the refreshed tray for Julia Martin from the surprised waiter and left the kitchen.

'What'd the old man want?' a waitress asked Elliot as he picked up his tray and prepared to take it to Sandra Morrow, who'd no doubt complain it was late and cold.

'He doesn't want me to serve Julia Martin,' said Elliot. 'He wants her to himself. Have you seen the way he looks at her? I think he has a crush on her,' he sang in a childish falsetto.

The two took their trays through the swinging doors.

Elliot's words had a larger audience than he realized. Chef Véronique wiped her hands on a tea towel and watched as the door clacked back and forth until it was finally still.

'Home tomorrow,' said Clara to the Gamaches as they walked into the library from the *terrasse*. She could go to bed soon, sleep eight hours, have breakfast with her in-laws then head back to Three Pines. Really, only a couple more waking hours with these people. She looked at her watch for the umpteenth time. Only ten? How could that be? My God, could the Morrows stop time too? 'When do you leave?'

'Couple of days yet,' said Reine-Marie. 'We're celebrating our wedding anniversary.'

'That's right,' said Clara, embarrassed that she'd forgotten. 'Congratulations. When?'

'It'll be thirty-five years on July first. Canada Day.'

'Easy to remember,' said Peter, smiling appreciatively at Gamache.

'Was it love at first sight?' Clara sat beside Reine-Marie.

'For me, yes.'

'But not for you?' Peter asked Gamache.

'Oh yes. She means her family.'

'No, you had family problems too? In-laws?' asked Clara, eager to hear someone else's misery.

'Not exactly. They were wonderful,' said Reine-Marie. 'He was the problem.'

She nodded to her husband, leaning against the fireplace mantel, trying to pretend he was invisible.

'You? What happened?' asked Clara.

'Now you must remember I was young,' he warned her. 'And in love. And not very worldly-wise.'

'This is going to be good,' said Peter to Clara.

'Reine-Marie invited me round after mass on a Sunday for lunch, to meet her family. There were seventy-three siblings.'

'Nine,' his wife corrected him.

'I wanted to impress them, of course, so I spent all week trying to figure out what to take her mother. Nothing too big. Didn't want to show off. Nothing too small. Didn't want to appear cheap. I lost sleep. Couldn't eat. It became the most important thing in my life.'

'What did you take?' Clara asked.

'A bath mat.'

'You're kidding,' sputtered Peter. Gamache shook his head, unable to speak. As the others broke into howls of laughter he finally found his voice.

'Well,' he wiped away his tears, 'it never goes bad.'

'Or out of style, but doesn't it lack a certain *je ne sais quoi*?'

'His gift giving has improved,' admitted Reine-Marie.

'Soap dishes?' asked Clara.

'Toilet plunger?' asked Peter.

'Shhh,' whispered Gamache. 'That's a surprise for our golden anniversary.'

'And surprise it will be,' said Clara, laughing. 'But don't get us started on toilets.'

'Oh, please. Don't,' said Peter, trying to recover himself.

'Oh, no,' said Gamache, claspings Peter by the arm. 'Your turn, old son.'

'OK.' Peter relented and took a swig of Drambuie. 'When I first went away to school and was unpacking all my little socks and shoes and slacks, I found a note pinned to my blazer in my father's handwriting. It said, *Never use the first stall in a public washroom.*'

Peter, grown up and greying, stood in the room, but what Gamache saw was a serious little boy with spots on his hands holding the note. And memorizing it, as one might memorize a passage from the Bible. Or a poem.

Breathes there the man with soul so dead?

What kind of man was Charles Morrow that he'd write that to his son? Gamache was longing to ask Peter about the statue, but hadn't yet had the chance.

'Good advice,' said Reine-Marie and they all looked at her. 'If you're in a hurry, where do you go? To the first stall.'

She didn't need to say more.

Peter, who'd never decoded what his father had meant but knew in his heart it must be vital, wondered.

Was it that mundane? Was it really just practical advice after all? As a child, even as a teen, and even, dare he admit it, as an adult, he'd fantasized that it was a secret code. Given only to him. Entrusted to him. By his father. A code that would lead to treasure.

Never use the first stall in a public washroom.

And he hadn't.

Gamache was just about to ask Peter's opinion of the statue when Thomas strolled in.

'You were talking about public washrooms?' he said.

'Toilets?' asked Mariana, breezing into the room with Sandra. 'Bean'll be sorry to be in bed. It's the sort of conversation a ten year old is good at.'

'Hello.' Julia walked through the screen doors from the *terrasse* carrying a *demi-tasse* of espresso. 'There's lightning and thunder out there. I think a storm's coming.'

'No,' said Thomas sarcastically. 'Peter's been talking about toilets, Julia.'

'Not really,' said Peter quickly.

Julia stared at him.

'Men's or women's?' asked Mariana, with exaggerated interest.

'Probably men's,' said Thomas.

'That's it, that's enough.' Julia threw her coffee cup to the carpet, where it shattered. The action was so unexpected, so violent, everyone in the room jumped.

'Stop it,' she rasped. 'I've had enough.'

'Calm down,' Thomas said.

'Like you? You think I don't know?' She started to smile, or at least to show her teeth. 'Thomas the success, the talented one,' she hissed at him.

'And you.' She turned to Mariana. 'Magilla, the gorilla. The screw-up with the screwed-up child. Bean. Bean? What kind of a name is that? What kind of kid is that? You think you're so smart? Well I know. I know it all.'

'And you. You're the worst.' She closed in on Peter. 'Gimme, gimme, gimme. You'd destroy anything and everything to get what you want, wouldn't you?'

'Julia.' Peter could barely breathe.

'You haven't changed. Cruel and greedy. Empty. A coward and a hypocrite. You all came here to suck up to Mother. You hated Father. And he knew it. But I know something none of you does.' Now she was up against Peter, tilting her face up to his. He didn't move, kept his eyes fixed on the painting above the fireplace. The Krieghoff. Lines and colour he understood. His sister's hysterics were unfathomable, terrifying.

'I know Daddy's secret,' Julia was hissing. 'I had to spend my life as far from you as I could get to figure it out, but I finally did. And now I'm back. And I know.'

She grinned malevolently and stared around the room. Her eyes finally came to rest on the Gamaches. For a moment she seemed confused, surprised to see them.

'I'm sorry,' she stammered, the spell broken, the rage gone. She looked down at the mess she'd made. 'I'm sorry.' She bent to pick it up.

'No, don't,' Reine-Marie said, stepping forward.

Julia stood up, holding a piece of the cup, a slight trickle of blood on her finger. 'I'm sorry.'

Her eyes filled with tears and her chin dimpled. All her rage dissolved. Turning, she ran out of the screen door leaving behind her family, who might have had their heads mounted on the old log walls. They'd been hunted, slaughtered, and put on display.

'She's cut her finger,' said Reine-Marie. 'I'll take her a bandage.'

'She's not hurt badly,' said Sandra. 'She'll be fine. Leave her.'

'I'll come with you,' said Gamache, grabbing the flashlight on the table by the door. He and Reine-Marie followed the bright spot of the flashlight as it played on the rough stones of the *terrasse* then the grass. They followed the light and the sobs and found Julia sitting on the lawn, near the edge of the forest. Near the statue.

'It's all right,' said Reine-Marie, kneeling down and putting an arm round her.

'It's. Not. All. Right.'

'Let me see your hand.'

All fight gone, Julia raised her hand. Reine-Marie examined it. 'The other one, please.' She found the small cut on Julia's finger and dabbed at the blood with a Kleenex. 'It's stopped bleeding. You'll be fine.'

Julia laughed, sputtering slime from her nose and mouth. 'You think?'

'We all get angry, we all shout and say things we don't mean,' said Reine-Marie.

Gamache handed Julia his handkerchief and she blew into it.

'I meant them.'

'Then things that didn't need to be said.'

'They did.' She was stuffing her innards back, sewing herself up, putting her skin, her make-up, her party frock back on.

'They'll never forgive me, you know.' She stood up, smoothed her dress, and wiped the tears and mucus from her face. 'Morrows have long memories for things like this. It was a mistake to come back. Foolish, really.' She gave a small snort of laughter. 'I think I might leave before breakfast tomorrow.'

'Don't,' said Reine-Marie. 'Talk to them. If you leave without seeing them it'll just get worse.'

'And you think talking would help? You don't know the Morrows. I've said way too much already.'

Gamache had been silent, watching and listening. And holding the torch. In the light he could just see her face, unnaturally pale, with harsh lines and shadows.

Not everything needed to be brought into the light, he knew. Not every truth needed to be told. And he knew she was right. He'd seen their faces as she'd fled. She'd said too much. He didn't understand it, couldn't see it, but he knew something foul had just come to light, come to life.