

Remnants, Episode 27: Weathered Diary

Content Warnings:

- A child with internalised body-shaming
- Mentions of sex workers using outdated language
- Descriptions of injuries to a child which imply abuse
- Depiction of grief in an active warzone
- Implied murder

Transcript

STRANGE, DRIPPY, DREAMLIKE SOUNDS

APPRENTICE

I walk the path. I know the way. My feet carry me. I have walked this path before a thousand times. Retread my own steps.

I look into the mirror and the mirror looks back.

GASP

THE DRIPPY, DREAMLIKE SOUNDS FALL AWAY. THE APPRENTICE CATCHES HIS BREATH.

THE SOUND OF FLAMES ROARS.

APPRENTICE

By the furnaces, again.

MOVEMENT, FOOTSTEPS.

APPRENTICE

What's this?

HE LIFTS AN OBJECT, DUSTS IT OFF.

APPRENTICE

A notebook? No. A diary. A battered one.

HE FLICKS THROUGH THE PAGES

APPRENTICE

The writing is so small and dense, it's hard to make out, I--

GASP

WHOOSH

'Sit, still, Pauline,' her mother scolds. She's trying to plait Pauline's hair, but it's too thick and slippery. 'Won't you sit still?' her mother asks, so tired.

Pauline tries. But she's been sitting still and being quiet for so long. It's so boring.

'Don't you want to look pretty for your first day of school?'

Pauline glares up at her mother, with her long black hair and perfect make up and delicate wrists. Pauline is only five but she already knows there's a world of distance between them. She's shorter than all her friends, chubbier, slower, my fidgety. She's not dainty and elegant like her mother, or like Charvi's daughter Annie who she sees nearly every day.

Pauline burst into tears.

'Did I pull too hard?' asks her mother.

Xiāng, who works out of the room next door to Pauline's mother, sticks her head through the doorway. She doesn't even look at Pauline, snivelling on the floor in front of her mother. She barks something in Cantonese. Pauline's mother replies, defensive. Xiāng retorts.

'She's not a baby! She's my daughter,' Pauline's mother snaps.

Xiāng's attention finally turns to Pauline, sniffing on the rug. Her look is filled with a frightening contempt. Pauline stops crying at once.

WHOOSH

Pauline pauses before she opens the door to the little room she shares with her mother. It's the middle of the afternoon, so she should be home and not working. Pauline isn't sure why her heart is beating so hard; she has good news. She's been offering to clean places door to door for months, now, steadfastly showing up and bringing her own supplies. It's tough because although there are rows of nice houses just a couple of streets away, there's a lot of girls like Pauline out there trying to make their way by cleaning them.

One of them is Annie. Pauline has grown up parallel to Annie. They never played together much; both Annie's mother and Pauline's own tried to keep them away from the cathouse where they worked and implement distance between their own and their colleagues' children. Everyone who worked there shared the same dream, Pauline's mother said, and it was that their children would grow up to have a better life than they did.

Pauline wished sometimes she could be friends with Annie. Annie is two years younger than Pauline, but already prettier than her, with her pale brown skin and her pretty wide eyes and her silky hair. She's short, like Pauline, but dainty, like a fairy. People are kind to her, and Pauline is pretty sure it's because she's beautiful. So often she sees Annie skipping down the steps of houses Pauline had cleaned the week before. Pauline knocks on the door. 'Sorry,' the people inside say, 'we've just taken on a cleaning girl.'

They'd not even offered Pauline to come back. And Pauline was good at cleaning. Excellent at it.

Pauline shakes her head. It's not going to be like that anymore. Because she's not just good at cleaning, she's smart, too. There's a little stretch of businesses, not far outside of their more run-down corner of the East End. Knocking on the doors of the posh houses, offering to clean, that's smart to a degree, isn't it, but Pauline hasn't seen any of the girls trying the shops. But shops need cleaning just as much as houses do.

And now Pauline has been offered regular work cleaning at the solicitor's, Cratchet and Pocket.

She takes a deep breath. In her mind, she practices saying telling her mother she found a job in Cantonese, before she opens the door to finally tell her.

WHOOSH

Pauline is polishing the desks as the office party at Cratchet and Pocket draws to a close. Ned, Mr Pocket's son, casts Pauline a look over his shoulder as he makes his way out of the shop. He often looks at Pauline this way, a small smile, different to his big, dazzling grin which he gives to their clients. He started working at Cratchet and Pocket in the summer, the same as Pauline. He's still not a proper solicitor but he's well on his way, Mr Pocket says. Pauline is sure he'll be brilliant at it. He's so handsome and charming.

'Pauline?' he calls, holding open the door.

Pauline pauses in her polishing. 'Yes?'

Ned comes back inside, reaching into his coat. 'I nearly forgot.' He holds out a small, poorly wrapped gift.

Pauline is blushing as she takes it. 'Oh,' she says.

'Merry Christmas,' says Ned.

Pauline smiles. 'Merry Christmas.'

Ned smiles again, all warm and small, then he leans forward and plants a little kiss on Pauline's cheek. 'See you in January,' he whispers. Then he turns and walks out.

Pauline clutches the present to her chest, watching him walk past the front window, jogging to catch up with his father and other colleagues.

Pauline opens her gift. Inside is a diary with a tan leather cover. She clutches it to her chest.

WHOOSH

Pauline is sweeping out Mr Pocket's office. It's early in the morning; she gets paid extra now to come in and get the place set up for everyone so they can get started. Usually, people don't start arriving until about quarter to eight, but it's only just gone seven when Pauline glances at the clock to be sure.

'I understand the predicament, Ned, I do,' says Mr Cratchet. 'It's just not a good time to be having this conversation.'

'You said I've been doing really well,' Ned retorts. He's using his mouse voice. Sometimes he speaks to Pauline like this, when it's just them in the office, after everyone else has gone home and Pauline is supposed to be polishing the floor. He speaks like this, all soft and small, and she melts. He kisses her, takes her into the back, into his father's office, where they can't be seen from the street. When he takes off her clothes he stops between every button to tell her she's beautiful.

Mr Cratchet does not seem to feel moved by Ned's small voice the way that Pauline is. 'You have done well, lad, but it's just—'

'I want to make sure I'm setting up a good life for us,' says Ned. Some of the softness is gone, replaced by something colder. Pauline recognises this, too. He finishes inside of her and then rolls away. He stares up at the ceiling. Sometimes Pauline asks if he'd like to go for dinner or a drink and then, this is the voice he uses when he replies. He looks at his expensive silver watch, and then he says he has to head home, maybe another time. So far, not any of the times Pauline has suggested. But it's difficult. Pauline understands it's difficult. He's a solicitor and she's just a cleaner. Of course it's difficult.

'I understand that,' says Mr Cratchet, still unmoved.

'I'm trying to better my family, don't you understand that?!' his voice has taken on an edge of desperation Pauline doesn't know. She frowns.

'She's a good girl, Ned, lad, and she reminds me of your mother, god rest her soul,' says Mr Cratchet, with a sigh. 'But I see no cause to raise your pay again so soon after your last promotion. Surely it's enough to get by on, and your father would help if you wanted to purchase a house.'

'She wants the Ritz for the wedding, Carlisle! The Ritz!' says Ned.

Mr Cratchet laughs, but Pauline can't really hear it. Her ears are ringing.

Calmly, she sets down her duster and wipes her hands on her apron. She opens the office door.

Mr Cratchet smiles, 'ah, Pauline!' he says.

Ned's own smile dies on his face. Pauline can't stand to look at him.

'I'm not well. See you tomorrow,' Pauline garbles, as she hurtles out of the door.

WHOOSH

Pauline is helping Mrs Cratchet set up the table for the easter party.

Every year, she likes to go all out, buying gifts for all the children in the parish and putting out a big spread for all the neighbours.

Outside, the party has started. She can see Ned and his wife, with their boy on her hip. She knows they went through a great many trials to acquire the baby, though she did her best to find out as little as possible, Mrs Cratchet is a gossip and told Pauline all about the adoption entirely against her will. The boy is four, now, and as quiet as ever.

The orphanage they got him from, where Mr Cratchet's brother works, apparently is set up to receive the illegitimate cast offs of many of England's elite. Most of the children are ordinary, of course, but Mrs Cratchet implied, with a waggle of her brows, that the boy her son has adopted is of some particularly high calibre.

This notion makes Pauline feel a little bit ill, and not just because it's about Ned. She wonders if Mrs Cratchet would have told her if she knew that Pauline's mother was from China.

There's a commotion in the hallway.

'Now, George, I explained this to you already,' says Mr Cratchet.

'She's dead, Carl, if I don't get access to this money. Why is that not getting into your head?'

'The trust is in her name, not yours.'

'She needs a better hospital, she needs more care, and my son—'

'You son lives in the countryside with his aunt, doesn't he?'

'What if I want him here?!' says George.

'It's not a case of his presence, George, it's that the trust is made in your wife's name and her parents were careful to make sure you would have no access to it until she dies, even as a spouse.'

'But she's going to die if I don't do something!' George barks.

Mr Cratchet opens the drawing room door. 'Oh, Pauline. I'm sorry,' he says. 'I just need to have a chat with Mr Peterson, here. Would you mind taking his son out to the party?'

Standing next to George Peterson is a thin, rangy looking boy. He looks to be a few years younger than Ned's son, but it's impossible to guess how many.

'No problem,' says Pauline.

'You're a good girl,' says Mr Cratchet.

Pauline holds her hand out to the boy. He hesitates a moment, and when he takes her fingers, she has to suppress a little gasp. His palms are covered in scars and scabs so thick she can feel them right away.

She swallows and leads the boy outside, trying not to be too troubled. Caning is not unusual. But caning so hard as to leave scars like this, on a child so young?

'So, what's your name?' says Pauline.

'Ted,' says the boy.

Pauline laughs. 'Oh, goodness. What a funny coincidence! There's another little boy here who goes by Teddy. Perhaps you'd like to play with him.'

Ted looks apprehensive.

Teddy, Ned's son, is hiding behind his mother's skirt.

'That's him, there,' says Pauline. 'Why don't you go and say hello.'

Ted gives her a reproachful look. He takes a few hesitant steps forward. Then, at once, he's transformed, grinning as he runs the last few feet towards Teddy. Something strikes Pauline as upsetting about it, but she can't place why.

She tells her mother about it when she gets home. 'Poor boy has had to learn to shape shift,' says her mother. 'Very sad. There was a girl like that I knew when we first came over the sea, Xiāng. She had a secret too awful to share. When we were just thirteen we decided to run away. My mother had died and though my poor dad was doing his best he had no idea how to care for me, and Xiāng was being hurt every day. So we stole money from the laundry her mother worked at and caught the train to London.'

'I never knew you were friends,' says Pauline.

Her mother smiles. 'In the end we were more than that. Family. The only people we knew who spoke Cantonese. It changes you, to be so alone with each other. That's why we fought so often.'

Pauline chews her lip. 'You must miss her.'

Pauline's mother shrugs. 'Of course. Like you miss all dead family members. But we honour her memory, don't we?'

Pauline nods.

'You're worried about the boy,' says Pauline's mother.

Pauline nods again.

'You don't know him. Maybe he was in some accident and his hands were burned? There's no way to know. All you can do is pray for him, Pauline.'

Pauline's eyes are stinging. She nods again.

WHOOSH

The sun is setting. Soon the city will be engulfed in near total darkness for another night. It's only been a few weeks since this started. Every window, smothered out, candles snuffed, streetlights dull. And then, the bombs begin to fall over the city.

'You should head home,' says Mr Cratchet, squeezing Pauline's arm.

More tears spill over her cheeks. She shakes her head. 'I need a moment longer.'

'We can drive you, if you need,' says Mr Cratchet, softly, kindly.

Pauline shakes her head again.

Mr Cratchet nods, and leaves Pauline alone in the graveyard.

The earth of Ned and his family's grave smells fresh. It's only been a few hours since they sunk Ned, his wife and his child into it. They're lucky to have bodies, Mr Pocket Senior kept saying.

Every time Pauline thinks about it she cries harder, harder still.

Rain falls, dimpling the fresh tilled earth of the graves. The caskets were closed. The bodies were there, but they were so badly burned from the fire and damage from the collapse that there was no way to look at them, no way for Pauline to have one last glimpse at Ned's charming face, which she'd been avoiding for so long.

They're lucky to have bodies to bury.

A sob racks through Pauline as the rain gets harder. She thinks of the crater where her mother's cathouse was. She thinks about all of the women who worked there, now just a hole in the ground. It was only Pauline and a handful of neighbours who even tried to search through the rubble. The whole city is a gravesite.

Pauline sighs. She really should go home before the bombs start to fall again.

WHOOSH

It's bitter cold March, like winter's sunk its teeth in extra deep.

If the streetlamps were on Pauline would be able to see the sparkle of frost on the footpaths, but they're dark, as they have been for months.

Mr Pocket is sick. The Cratchets are only paying her to clean the house but she stays a little later each night. He seems lonely. Lonely and sad. He speaks often about Ned, and his wife, and their son. His misted-over eyes well with tears.

On her way out of the door today he grabbed Pauline's sleeve. He pressed some coins into her palm. 'Pick up some flowers to lay on the graves, won't you?' he tells her.

'I'll try,' Pauline promises.

'Good girl,' says Mr Pocket. He sits back in his armchair with a groan. He will be there when Pauline comes back tomorrow.

Pauline hears the thunder of a plane's engine and gasps. She sees it swooping overhead, belching out clouds of thick, black smoke, shuttering out the twinkling starlight way above them. And then, the ground shakes. The plane has come down.

There's a moment, and then the boom of an explosion as whatever the plane had onboard succumbs to the crash.

Pauline looks in the direction where the plane fell, a few streets over. She sees the orange flicker of flames. Then, another crash. This one is less bassy. Pauline recognises it at once: the sound of a building collapsing.

This is much closer to Pauline, something tumbling down in the aftershock of the plane's impact and the exploding bomb. Pauline, senseless, thoughtless, runs towards it.

She rounds the corner onto Ned's old street. The front part of the house has been gone for months, since a bomb landed on theirs and their neighbour's homes, killing everyone inside. But the back half had stood, the staircase remarkably intact. The day after the bodies were removed from the wreck, Pauline went over to the house. She walked through the kitchen doorway, the only part of that wall still standing. The kettle was on the stove, plates sat on the countertop, waiting to be washed.

They'd all been in the living room when it happened. Mr Pocket told Pauline they would have been reading to Teddy, most likely, when the bomb hit. This thought seems to comfort Mr Pocket, but it haunts Pauline. Haunts her.

Part of the back wall has come down now. The stairs, clinging on by a thread, are gone. A cloud of dust rises from the pile of indistinct rubble that lies in its place, bricks and splinters and debris, everywhere.

Pauline's heart is hammering. 'Hello?' she calls.

Bricks skitter, rubble shifts. Pauline gasps in horror. She clammers forwards over the mess towards the movement. There, between the bricks and snapped wood, she sees a small hand coated in dust.

'Oh my god!' Pauline cries. She tears at the bricks, throwing them aside, revealing a small boy. He can barely breathe. There's blood cutting through the dust otherwise covering him. On his wrist, a silver Rolex, far too big for his spindly arm.

Ned's watch.

Pauline feels bowled over with horror. 'Teddy?!' she asks, with horror.

There's more movement behind her, someone else clawing in the rubble, but Pauline is transfixed on Teddy, covered in dust. He's dead. He's supposed to be dead. But here he is, alive.

'Help,' croaks Teddy.

WHOOSH

The war has been over for years, but things are only now returning to normal. Mr Cratchet is back in the office full-time with a brand new assistant. Pauline's doing some of the administrative work now, too. Mr Cratchet said she's proved herself, helping Mr Pocket out so much after what happened with Ned. Mr Pocket himself is rarely around now, because of his illness, and because he has to look after Teddy.

'Our miracle boy,' Mr Pocket always calls him when they drop into the shop to say hello.

Teddy's quiet, polite, always extremely gracious with Pauline. He'd been in the hospital for months after she'd dug him out of the rubble of his parents' home and carried him down the street in her arms. Mr Pocket insists on calling this 'the accident', so everyone does.

There's a nervous energy to Teddy, sometimes. He picks the edge of his father's watch. He looks out of windows when he's supposed to be listening, if he thinks people aren't paying attention.

'He'll be taking up an apprenticeship this time next year,' says Mr Pocket, proudly, clapping Teddy on the back. 'Our miracle boy. You know, they said they weren't sure he'd ever speak

again after the accident, but he's beaten all the odds. Not only an excellent speaker but top of his class, across the board.'

'Apprentice next summer?' says Pauline, frowning. 'Shouldn't he finish school first?'

'I *will* have finished by then,' says Teddy, in this smooth, practised voice. It's like butter. 'I'll be fifteen.'

Pauline blinks and shakes her head. 'Fourteen already?' she says, bewildered. He's tall, though he doesn't look like he's about to hit puberty at all despite that.

'And a heartbreaker already,' says Mr Pocket. He claps Teddy on the back again. Teddy's expression goes momentarily vacant at the contact, Pauline realises, before he rights himself and smiles. 'Chip off the old block,' says Mr Pocket.

They shake everyone's hands as they head out again. Teddy takes Pauline's hand, and she shudders. His gaze snaps and fastens onto hers at once. His palm is rough, ridged. *Scarred.*

'Goodbye, Pauline,' he says, squeezing her fingers and then turning to leave.

Pauline lets out a shaky breath.

'I'm worried,' says Mr Cratchet, as the door closes on its hinges.

'Me too,' says Pauline, breathless.

'I think he's forgotten that Teddy is adopted. I'm not sure if Ned and Julia ever got around to telling him, either.'

Pauline inhales sharply. She nods. 'Mr Cratchet,' she says. 'Didn't Teddy have blue eyes? Before the accident?'

Mr Cratchet frowns. 'I-- I. No. He can't have done. He's got those big, warm brown eyes, hasn't he?'

'Yeah. Yeah he has,' says Pauline. She swallows hard. She looks down at her palm, as though the ghosts of Teddy's scars might be pressed into her own skin.

WHOOSH

It's the end of the Christmas Party. Pauline stoops over near the lamp on her desk so she can reapply some lipstick before they all make their way out to the pub.

'Are you coming, Pauline?' asks Teddy, in his velvet voice. He's been the apprentice at the firm for a little over three years, now. He's not exceptionally tall, as Pauline would have

expected him to become, and in the last few months, a smattering of stubble has finally started to crawl across his chin.

Mr Cratchet says some boys are just late bloomers, but Teddy's voice only finished breaking over the summer.

There's no denying he's sharp though. And at once, incredibly smooth. A knife of a man. Or a boy, as Pauline is inclined to think of him.

'Before we head out,' says Teddy, he reaches into pocket and pulls out a small, perfectly wrapped gift. She knows what it is before it even lands in her hands, just from the shape of it.

Pauline's throat tightens. 'Oh. Teddy,' she squeaks.

Teddy's perfectly curated smile wavers at the edges. 'Sorry, do you not like gifts?'

'No, I—' Pauline peels off the paper. There, a tan leather diary, embossed with the year '1950'. 'Ned-- I. Your father. He used to get these for me.'

Teddy shakes his head. 'Yes, my grandfather told me about it. He said it was a tradition of his. I thought it would make you smile.'

Pauline sobs. She shakes her head. 'Sorry, I'm being silly.'

'It's not silly,' says Teddy. He puts a hand on Pauline's forearm. His palm is warm. She can feel the scars on it, less pronounced than they once were, now. She looks up into his eyes – wide, brown, flecked with little sparks of a colour so close to gold it feels wrong to call it otherwise – and she can't stop herself from speaking.

'You're adopted,' she says.

Teddy's eyes tighten at the edges. He drops his hand. 'What?'

'They adopted you. Ned and Julie. You're adopted.'

Teddy shakes his head. 'No, I-- I don't. My grandfather.'

'He's been through a lot,' says Pauline.

Teddy laughs. Its small at first, but it gets bigger and bigger until it seems to fill the whole room. He's laughing so much that tears are running down his cheeks.

'I'm going home,' says Pauline.

'Wait!' Teddy calls after her.

'No,' says Pauline. Her heart is in her throat.

WHOOSH

The bell on the basket next to Pauline's letter box tinkles. She gets up from her armchair by the fire. There's a couple more Christmas cards, and a package wrapped in brown paper.

'Late to send these, two days out from Christmas Eve,' Pauline mutters, making her way back to her warm chair, and her brandy.

She opens the cards; from clients at the shop. She sticks them up on the little table by her chair.

Next she picks up the parcel. She recognises the handwriting. It's Teddy's. The stamp is from Paris.

'Done very well for yourself, haven't you,' she mutters.

Teddy's been gone for months, now, ever since he found out he was the heir to some lord or other. Fanciful business. The moment Mr Pocket Senior had passed on, as soon as Teddy had proved himself to Mr Cratchet that he was worthy of taking on more responsibilities, as he'd built up a reputation with the clients. That was the moment, of course, that he'd been summoned away to claim this inheritance.

It all seemed very convenient, to Pauline.

Inside the package, there's a diary for 1955. it's extremely expensive-feeling. The paper is heavy and soft under Pauline's finger tips.

Inside a pocket in the front cover, there's a letter. It thanks Pauline again for how she'd helped him. If he'd not known he was adopted, he'd never have been looking for his birth parents, and so would never have discovered he was the heir to the du Perier fortune.

Pauline scoffs.

WHOOSH

It has taken many months, but Pauline has tracked down the other boy who was buried in the rubble the night Pauline found Teddy. Victor's memories are vague and faded now, but he tells her what he remembers, including about his friend Ted.

'Ted Pocket?'

'I don't know what his name was,' says Victor. He lights himself another cigarette. 'He came out of nowhere. He weren't from London, though. You could tell by his accent. It'd change whoever he spoke with.'

'Not from London?' Pauline presses. Her heart is in her throat. 'But from what you said, Sally knew him? Surely? Or else why would she risk her life.'

Victor shakes his head. 'Sally was just like that. She really cared, you know? She'd have told me if she knew him before because we found him down an alley one night, near the shops. He was right grubby, half starved, too. Barely said anything to us for days. She'd have told me if she knew him.'

'But her sister Annie was the cleaner for the Pockets when they adopted Edward,' says Pauline. 'I know she took Sally with her on those routes, I used to see them walking together.'

Victor shrugs. 'I'm telling you, if she knew him, she'd have told me, 'cause she worried about that lad a lot. He was frightened, she could tell. Course, we was all frightened because it was the war and so many people was dying. But he was frightened different to that. It scared Sally. I could tell that, too. She tried to look out for him, but he was hard to look out for.'

'What do you mean by that?'

Victor shrugs. 'He didn't trust us. He'd run off all the time, hide away for days on end. It was just cause he was scared but it frightened Sally silly.'

Victor sighs. 'You know, we was just kids. I was only 16. I don't know. It makes me sad. I worried about that boy. I've been worrying about him, all this time.'

Pauline rummages in her handbag for the newspaper clipping of Teddy on his wedding day. She hands it to Victor.

Victor looks at it a long time. 'I mean. I can imagine him growing up looking like this, but the boy what I knew, he had—'

'Brown eyes? Yes,' says Pauline.

Victor shakes his head. 'What's going on then?'

'I don't know, I don't understand it,' says Pauline, 'but I'm going to do my best to find out.'

WHOOSH

Pauline is making tea.

A gentleman has stopped by. 'I'm looking for Edward Pocket,' says the man, gruffly.

Pauline blinks. She puts the lid on the teapot. 'What did you say your name was?'

'I didn't,' says the man. 'It's Stephen.'

Pauline nods. 'I pulled him out of the rubble. Everyone said it was a miracle. They thought him dead, they thought they'd buried him, but...'

'But?'

Pauline shrugs. 'You know, for a while I was obsessed with this too. Who was he, where did he come from. I have wondered about it, of course I have, and I have my theories, but I decided to let it go.'

'Why?' says Stephen.

'You mean besides the fact I'll never get an answer out of him, however much I tried? I stopped looking for who he was because I found the answer.'

'Who was he?' asks Stephen, like he's famished and she's offering him a ham sandwich.

'A frightened little boy.'

Stephen's expression twists. 'But-- he lied! He's a fraud! He's not Ted Pocket and he never was, he lied to you, to everyone. The contact lenses-- those must have cost a fortune, and it's a deliberate act of falsify an identity to claim a fortune which---'

'Well, yes, that part I understand you might be frustrated with. But the du Perier fortune would have simply gone to the state, otherwise. This is a victimless lie. What does it matter?'

Stephen is livid. 'He has far more victims than you can imagine. Did you hear what he did to Pearl Grenville?'

Pauline laughs. 'Besides being the only person I'd ever seen make that woman smile? No.'

'He-- he coerced-- he--' Stephen takes a steadying breath. 'When you say he was a frightened boy. What do you mean?'

So Pauline explains about Victor. She explains about her long train journey home, thinking about the moment Mr Pocket Senior had brought Edward to thank her for saving his life. 'But I didn't make the real connection until years later when Gloria Peterson came in.'

'Who?'

'She's the sister of a client. He'd left his money in a trust for his son, Edwin, but Edwin hadn't been seen for years. During the war, his aunt had brought him to London to see his father off; late sign-up to the army. The boy had run off, disappeared. Nobody had heard nothing from him for years. Nobody had heard from him at *all* since that day in London, in November, 1940. In the middle of the Blitz.'

'She started writing, asking about the money. As George had died in action, and Edwin was missing, she would be the next beneficiary. But it hadn't been long enough for Edwin to be declared dead.'

Stephen is frowning, shaking his head. 'What does this have to do with anything?'

'Well you see, a person has to be missing ten years to be declared dead, and it had only been nine. Write back to us next year, we told her. Only when she did, she said she'd had a *letter* from Edwin, accusing us of having his contact details and notifying him that she was after his money. Of course we'd done nothing of the sort, and again I didn't think much of it at the time. You get all sorts of nonsense in estates, you see.'

'He'd write to her every year, then, to tell her he was alive, with details which could only have been known by the real Edwin, so she knew it would not be possible for them to be fraudulent. She was an incessant woman, she'd write to us, copy those letters to us, word for word. And we were looking for Edwin, but the letters came from all over the place, he did not seem to have a fixed address, and no longer seemed to exist, anywhere. The letters were the only sign that he was alive.'

'So, what? It's still going on?' says Stephen, desperately.

'No. She stopped writing to us in 1954.'

'So?'

'Well, that's the year Edward left Cratchet and Pocket. 1954, six years ago now. He left, and I know it was then, because he sent me a 1955 diary for Christmas that year, in the post. It was the last I ever heard from him. And then I became obsessed. Eventually I found Victor. He'd been in the rubble the same night I'd pulled Ted out. I dwelled on it and I dwelled on it. And then, the next year, Gloria Peterson wrote to us. She had not heard from Edwin all year. Would she need to wait another nine before she could claim the money in her brother's trust?

'As I was sat there, holding the letter, I realised. The scars on Teddy's hands. You see, I'd met Edwin when he was a very small boy. I remember it distinctly because it was so distinctly awful. He'd had these marks on his hands in so many layers. It was heart-breaking.

'And Victor had said when I met him that his friend Ted has been frightened. He said that boy had come to the city to see his father off just before he joined the war.

'Cratchet and Pocket is only a few streets over from where George Peterson lived. We started hiring him to fix things for us, because of his wife. I won't get into that. But on the couple of times his son was visiting when we'd ask him to do a job, and-- well. I suppose we were kind to Edwin.

'He can't have known London very well at all. It doesn't surprise me that he ran to somewhere he knew, where he felt safe. And like I said, I don't think he ever meant to pretend to *be* Edward. I think, probably, he just didn't want to be Edwin anymore.'

'And you think that makes it right?' says Stephen. His voice is shaking with anger.

‘No. It’s not right or wrong. It’s just providence. Happenstance. That’s all.’

Stephen shakes his head. ‘No.’

Pauline purses her lips. ‘I think you should leave.’

Stephen stands up, but he doesn’t start to make his way to the door.

It occurs to Pauline, for the first time, to be scared.

She gets up too. She starts to collect their tea things. Her hands are shaking, making the teacup tinkle against the saucer of biscuits. She starts to head to the kitchen.

She can hear Stephen breathing behind her, hear his heavy boots on the floor as he steps around the living room.

In the kitchen, Pauline runs the tap and sets the tea things in the sink. She opens the kitchen drawer, her fingers closing around the handle of a knife.

She glances up.

There, in the kitchen window, the outline of Stephen obscures the reflection around her. Pauline looks through the gap, out into the street. Some children are kicking a ball between one another.

There is a sudden crack, a burst of pain, and then, Pauline is floating. It’s Christmas. Ned Pocket has just given her a present, and kissed her cheek. She skips home, snow dusting the pavement around her.

What a precious day.

WHOOSH

APPRENTICE

He killed her. He killed her just for knowing me. She saved my life, and it’s my fault she’s dead, and I’m--- I’m a liar. I’m a liar, and a fake, and--

I need to understand, *I need to understand!*

I need to see it. My own remnant. I need it. I need to see it!

SIR
Apprentice.

THE APPRENTICE GASPS.

APPRENTICE
Sir, I'm sorry, I--

SIR
You've been lying to me.

APPRENTICE
I'm sorry.

SIR
Lying again.

APPRENTICE
No, I swear, I---

SIR
Enough!

I've heard enough.

APPRENTICE
Please, please don't wipe my memories, please, I'm begging, I--

SIR
What point would there be in that?

APPRENTICE

Wh—what?

SIR

I tried, and failed, didn't I, last time? So what sense would there be in trying again?

APPRENTICE

How do you--?!

SIR

You are not good enough a liar to keep things from me for very long.

APPRENTICE

Please, sir. I'm sorry!

SIR

No. No. Enough.

I need some space, from you.

APPRENTICE

But---

SIR

No!

WHOOSH

APPRENTICE

(very quietly)

Sir?

HE SNIFFS

END