

The honest answer was that Mr. Boyle was completely uncertain as to the location of Mr. Smith. He, of course, could not tell that to Misses Smith and her daughter. It would be rather upsetting for everyone.

He settled for being just a smudge less than honest. "Mr. Smith is still in transit, ma'am," Mr Boyle said. "We," he was careful not to put the responsibility on himself alone, "will be sure to contact you as soon as we hear anything." He folded his hands neatly on the desk and smiled. Maybe she would leave politely now. He quite hoped she would.

Misses Smith looked over to her daughter. The younger Smith was not a young child. Mr Boyle figured she had to be at least thirteen, but he'd never had an eye for ages. He could tell she was on the verge of tear, however.

"Thank you, Mr. Boyle," Misses Smith said as she took her daughter's hand. Mr. Boyle could see their knuckles whiten as they clasped tightly. He tried to meet Misses Smith's eyes as she stood. He tried to keep smiling. He failed at both. The Smith's gave a polite curtsy and left.

As the latch clicked Mr. Boyle slumped over his desk and let his head fall into his hands. It had been four months of this. Miss Smith was the sixth person to call his office today. This job had not been going as expected.

His desk was full of documents that weren't to be shown to the public under any circumstances. He had families of soldiers coming by at a rate of nearly a dozen a day. He had to lie to his work to his wife, his son, and his parents. Of course, they proud of their "government boy" but if they really knew what he did... well, he didn't care to think about it.

Mr. Boyle cut off his spiral into "what if." He needed to get some work done today. He buzzed his secretary and asked her not to let anyone else in.

He opened the first manila folder from the stack on his desk. It contained a sheath of crumpled and stained pages. As he flipped through the stack of papers filled with scrunched handwriting he noticed they had been singed in some places and stained heavily with something brown in others. He sighed and tried not to dwell on the details and set the pages aside.

Mr. Boyle pulled his typewriter closer and peered at the cramped handwriting on the pages next to him. He started to read and his hands followed as they copied his reading into neat type.

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FIELD REPORT CA-SMITH-017-09

I have been running for hours now. I've taken refuge in what may have been a bank at one point. I'm hiding under a desk by the vault while I write this. I can hear those things pass by occasionally. The rhythmic dragging of their leather skin against the asphalt is loud in the stillness of this city. Soon I will need to move again. I will try to wait until sundown. They can't see as well in the dark.

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