

taken advantage of the church trip to the fair to celebrate their tenth year in business. They didn't say very much more about it, beyond a few comments about bulbs and tulips, but listening to them, Zorrie got an idea she chewed on the rest of the day and all the way home. She thought about it as she sat, exhausted, eating a celery stick in her chair in the living room that night, and again the next morning before she went out to water. After breakfast, before getting started on the windows put off from the day before, she took out her atlas and started flipping through the pages.

At lunch she looked at an old copy of *National Geographic* that had an article on the tulip industry of Holland. She spent a long time peering at the rows of orange and yellow and pink and red tulips and at the windmills and canals and people on bicycles and beaches along the seacoast. She read the article that accompanied the pictures carefully. There was a mention in it of clouds gathering over rough waters. That evening she opened her old cigar box and, without touching the tin of Luna powder, pulled out her packet of letters from Harold. She had tied them up with string so many years before that she couldn't remember having done it. Among them was the announcement she had received of Harold's death. She read it through twice, then opened her atlas again and traced a line with her finger down from Amsterdam to The Hague and out into the waters of the channel beyond.

She bought a suitcase, applied for a passport, signed on with a tour, and left Halloween Day. Blake took her to the airport and stood smiling in his dark blue Pioneer Hybrids hat at the gate as she walked down the tunnel and onto the plane. A stewardess greeted her with a bright "Happy Halloween" and pointed her to a seat next to a man who, despite the

pressed suit he was wearing, looked like he ought to be out on a football field. As she got settled, a small boy walked by, wearing a black cape and plastic vampire fangs.

EVEN THOUGH SHE changed planes three times in three places she had never been, it seemed like she never really quite left her seat, that the next twenty-three hours were spent in the dim light one row in front of the smokers, next to large men or women in jogging suits or fidgeting children, far from the windows and their views out onto dark or light nothing. She wondered if Harold had ever gotten his plane this high, or at least high enough so that down to him had seemed, like it did to her in that shuddering fuselage, as distant as up. But sitting there, riding through what the deep voices of the pilots referred to as pockets of turbulence, some of which elicited gasps from her fellow voyagers, Zorrie was pleased to discover that the prospect of falling from the sky did not bother her as she had feared it might. If something happened, it would all be over and that would be that. She slept soundly almost all the way from New York to Amsterdam.

So strange did the following days seem to her that she barely registered the other members of the small group she was part of. It was rainy and cool and everything in the city seemed to glitter. They rode a boat on the canals, ate fried potatoes with mayonnaise, and went to the Mauritshuis museum in The Hague, where Zorrie stood for a long time in front of a little painting of a goldfinch tied to a perch and another of the city of Delft, with its buildings reflected in silvery water. She had seen her share of paintings before, but these seemed of a different order, works birthed into the world

by another process entirely, one that must have involved much patience and many years. She was surprised, because she had not done it in so long, to find herself humming as she stood there looking at the chained bird and at a pair of tiny women talking together in dark dresses as Delft rose across the river beyond, and after a minute realized it was “Love Me Tender,” which had been playing on the canal boat.

She had slept so little the night before that she almost didn't go along for the visit to the house of Anne Frank, then found herself so transfixed by the narrow stairways and low ceilings and photographs of Anne and her family that when the group had free time on their last day in Amsterdam, she stood in the long line and climbed up to the secret annex again. On the bus ride down to the American Cemetery at Margraten she read the copy of Anne's diary that she had purchased in the gift shop, and even as she followed along with the group on their tour of the fields of white crosses, she found herself thinking not of Harold, who had left nothing behind to be buried except in a cigar box that had stopped glowing years ago, but of the young girl, soon to die in unspeakable circumstances, who had written, “Think of all the beauty still left around you and be happy.”

The final day, the group went to Scheveningen by the sea, and while most of her fellows were content to sit over Dutch waffle cookies and cups of hot coffee and write postcards and watch the rain, Zorrie went out onto the beach and down to the water and did not mind one bit that she had no umbrella or that her good shoes got quickly soaked. This time she did think of Harold, for if some small part of him lay under a sprinkling of worn-out Luna powder, not to mention in the

treacherous folds of her heart, the rest of him was somewhere out in the deeps before her.

Although she had stood that time probably no farther than a hundred yards from mist-shrouded Lake Michigan, she had never seen anything larger than a good-sized pond before, and she had certainly never seen waves. Over and over again they rushed up the wet sand toward her, only to pull away again. Everything smelled of salt and depth. There were shells and gleaming curls of seaweed at her feet and gulls over her head. A boat with an orange sail gusted off along the horizon. She tried to follow it all with her eyes and found it brought to mind a windy day and a field of young green wheat, but the white-capped green waters before her never stopped moving, or roaring, so the comparison couldn't hold. What she had before her was unlike anything but itself. And it struck her that if this marvelous surface was what Harold had fallen through and disappeared under, it wasn't all bad. The fires that had ripped him out of the sky would have been instantly doused and the plane cooled. Harold and his fellows would have ridden down to his rest through bubbles and currents and cold, soothing water into a world of quiet wonder.

"Full fathom five, thy Harold lies," Zorrie said aloud. "Of his bones are coral made; those are pearls that were his eyes." The words had come to her, across the ocean and over the ponds and lakes of time, from Mr. Thomas's classroom. She couldn't remember what followed, only the ending, and standing there in her wet, sandy shoes, she realized that the watery strangeness before her spread unimpeded from channel to sea to oceans bigger than any atlas could indicate or any conversation cover. It made the earth and the air that enveloped

it seem bigger, for it was made of eternity, and eternity was what held all things, including her. She had imagined that at some point during the trip she might cry a little, but if it was just rain and salt spray on her face or tears she couldn't have said.

As she sat later after a hot shower over her own cup of coffee with Anne's diary on the table before her, she tried to imagine whether she would have been brave as the fires grew and the waters rushed up toward her, or as the walls of her hiding place grew smaller and the Germans came nearer, but found she was too tired to pursue it. There was a bouquet of blood-red peonies on the table by the sugar bowl. Lights were coming on, and the darkening sea filled the window beyond. A mirror in a heavy frame hung next to an ornate clock, and a waitress was slowly filling cups with tea. All of it looked like something that could hang on the wall next to the paintings she had admired at the Mauritshuis. When one of the guides came and stood a moment beside her and tried to engage her in conversation, Zorrie just smiled and shook her head.

On the plane out of Amsterdam she sat next to a middle-aged American woman named Ellie Storms. Ellie had soft, tired-looking features and long, complicated hair that she touched at from time to time. She was from Kansas City, Missouri, though she had family near Evansville, Indiana, where she often visited. When Zorrie heard this, some of the feeling she had had, standing on the beach with the wind-hoisted sprays of salt-rich moisture scoring her hands and face, returned to her, and it suddenly seemed more important than anything to talk about home. Sitting in her narrow seat far above and half the wide world away from the little corner of