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The third book is the mesmerizing RAVEN CYCLE quartet by bestselling author, Maggie Stiefvater. Fans of the SHIVER trilogy will love this new quartet!380 printed pages looking for the face it was before the world was made. - WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS, Before the world is made Let's be grateful to the mirror for revealing to us only our appearance. - SAMUEL BUTLER, EREWHON Prologue OVER Persephone stood on a bare mountaintop, her ruffled ivory dress whipping around her legs, her crowds of white blonde curls streaming behind her. It was cunning, irrelevant, something blew between the rocks and caught one of them. The wind was fierce up here, without trees, to cover it up. The world below was gloriously autumnal. Adam Parrish stood next to him, his hands tinged in his fat-stained cargo pants pocket. He looked tired, but his eyes were clear, more so than the last time he saw him. Since Persephone was only interested in important things, she had not considered her age for a long time, but she seemed to look at it as brand new. That crude expression, the youthful intuition on his shoulders, the frantic rampant energy in it. What a good day, he thought. It was cool and ed overly, the power of the sun, the lunar order or nearby road construction did not intervene. This corpse path, he said, aligned his body with the invisible path. As he did, he felt something in it starting to buzz pleasantly, a feeling very similar to the satisfaction that came with aligning book spikes on a shelf. The Ley line. Adam cleared it. He nodded calmly. Find it for yourself. He immediately stepped on the line, his face turning along its length to a natural gaze like a flower looking into the sun. It took Persephone rather longer to master this skill, but then, unlike his young student, he didn't do any cheaply in supernatural forests. It wasn't very good for deals. Group projects weren't usually my worlds. What do you see? Asked. His eyes were shaking, his dusty eyelashes resting on his face. Because he was on Persephone, and because it was a good day to do so, he saw what he was seeing. It had nothing to do with the Ley line. There was a disturbance of shattered figures on the floor of a nice castle. An official letter printed on county stationery. A friend twitching at his feet. Besides you - reminded persephone slightly. He himself saw so many events and opportunities along the corpse path that no one stood up. She was a much better medium when she had two friends Calla and Maura with her: Calla settled on her impressions and Maura to put them in context. Adam seemed to have potential in this department, although he's too new to replace Maura - no, it's a ridiculous one To put it this way, Persephone told you you weren't going to replace your friends. He struggled to think of the right word. He's not replacing her. Save. Yes, of course, that's what you did to your friends. Maura was supposed to be rescued? If Maura had been on the mountain, Persephone could have told me. But if Maura had been on the mountain, Persephone wouldn't have had to say it. He sighed deeply. He sighed a lot. I see things. Adam's eyebrows have either developed concentration or uncertainty. It's more than one thing. It's like animals in the Barn. I see things ... Sleep. Dreaming, Persephone agreed. As soon as he brought the sleepers to his attention, they were at the head of his consciousness. Three, he added. What's three? Three in particular, he murmured. To wake up. Oh, no, no, no, no, no. You can't wake up. Persephone has never been very useful in the concept of right and wrong. But in this case, the third sleeper was definitely wrong. For a few minutes, he and the boy, Adam, reminded themselves; it was so difficult to find the birth names important—they were both standing there, feeling the trajectory of the ley line under their feet. Persephone carefully and unsuccessfully tried to find the bright thread of Maura's existence in the tangled fibers of energy. Next to him, Adam was once again inside himself, most interested, as always, in what remained unknown to him: in his own mind. Outside, Persephone reminded him. Adam didn't open his eyes. His words were so soft that the wind almost destroyed them. I don't mean to be rude, ma'am, but I don't know why it's worth learning. Of coursephone wasn't sure if he thought such a reasonable question could be rude. When you were a baby, what was it about learning to talk? Who am I learning to communicate with? He was pleased to understand the concept immediately. He said, Everything. Calla was overwhelmed by how much Maura had in her room at 300 Fox Way, and that's what she told Blue. Blue didn't answer. He went through the papers at the window and head butted his head. From this angle, he looked exactly like his mother, compact and athletic and hard to overturn. Oddly enough, he was kind, despite cutting his dark hair unevenly on his head and wearing a shirt he attacked with a rototiller. Or maybe it's these things. When did she get so beautiful and grown up? Without being taller? That's probably what happened to the girls when they only lived on yogurt. Blue asked: Have you seen these? They're really good. Calla wasn't sure what Blue was looking at, but she believed him. Blue wasn't the kind of girl who gave fake compliments, not even to her mother. Although he was nice, he wasn't nice. It's a good thing, too, because they're nice people. Calla's irritable. Your mother is a woman of many talents, growled. He took years of his life. Calla loved the things she could rely on: filing systems, months of 31 days, purple lipstick. Maura liked chaos. Like to aggravate. Calla picked up Maura's pillow. He was abused by feelings. At the same time, he felt where the pillow was obtained, how Maura balled it up under his neck, the number of tears carried on the pillowcase and the content of five-year dreams. The psychic hotline rang in the next room. Calla's concentration is gone. Damn it, he said. It was psychometric – only his touch often revealed both the origin of the object and the feelings of the owner. But this pillow was treated so often that it contained too many memories to rearrange. If Maura had been there, Calla would have been able to easily separate the useful ones. But if Maura had been there, she wouldn't have been needed. Blue, over here. Blue theatrically applauded Calla's shoulder. His natural talent immediately sharpened Calla's abilities. He saw Maura's hope keep him awake. Gray's shaded jaw on the pillowcase. I saw the contents of Maura's last dream: a mirrored lake and a distant familiar man. Artemus, it's not my fault. Maura's long-missing ex-lover. Anything? Blue asked. Nothing useful. Blue then took her hand, knowing that Calla was able to pick up as much of the girls' feelings as she could from the pillows. But Calla didn't need psychic powers to figure out that Blue's sensible, pleasant expression contradicted the fire that burned angrily inside. School was imminent, love was in the air, and Blue's mother disappeared on some mysterious personal quest more than a month earlier, leaving behind her newly acquired hit man beau. The blue was a hurricane lurking on the beach. Oh, Maura! Calla's stomach is dislocated. I told you not to go. Touch it. Blue showed a large black scrying bowl. It's been slanted on the carpet, untouched since Maura used it. Calla didn't think much of the scrying or mirror magic or anything that had to do with plumbing the mysterious ether of space and time in order to really fuck around on the other side as well. Technically, crying wasn't dangerous; He was just meditating on a mirrored surface. But practically often involves freeing the soul from the body. And the soul was a fragile traveler. The last time Calla, Persephone and Maura messed with mirror magic, they accidentally made Maura's half-sister, Neeve, disappear. At least Calla never liked Neeve. But Blue was right. Probably the scrying bowl was the most answer. Calla said, All right. But don't touch me. I don't want you to make him any stronger than he is now. Blue raised his hand as if to prove it. He didn't have a gun. Reluctantly, Calla touched the bowl rim and the darkness immediately billowed through her vision. He was asleep, dreaming. To fall through the endless black water. He soared towards his stars. It's a metal piece in his face. The hair stuck to the corner of his mouth. Where was Maura in all this? An unknown voice chanted his head, strident and astringent and sing-song: Queens and Kings Kings and Queens Blue Lilies, Lily Blue Crowns and Birds Swords and Things Blue Lily, Lily Blue Suddenly, he focused. It was Calla again. Now he saw what Maura saw: three sleepers - light, dark, and in

between. The knowledge that Artemus is underground. The certainty is that no one will come out of the caves unless they bring it. The realization that Blue and his friends were part of something mightier, something huge and stretching and slowly waking up – BLUE! screamed Calla because she realized why her efforts were suddenly so successful. I'm sure Blue touched his shoulder, amplified everything. Hey, I'm sorry, I told you not to touch me. Blue didn't look sorry. What did you see? Calla still slipped into the other consciousness. He couldn't get it out of my head that he was preparing for a fight that had actually been fought. He couldn't remember if he won last time. During Maura Sargent there was a nagging feeling that time no longer works. Not that it didn't work, exactly. Just that he no longer runs forward the way he came to think as usual. Minutes stacked in minutes to hours, then days and weeks. He was beginning to suspect that he might be using the same minute over and over again. This may have bothered some people. Some people may not have noticed at all. But Maura wasn't a few people. When he was 14, he began to dream about the future. He spoke to his first soul when he was 16. When he was 19, he used remote control to look at the other side of the world. The time and space was a bathtub maura splashed into. So you knew there were impossible things in the world, but you didn't believe that a cave where time stands is one of them. You've been here an hour? Two? One day? Four days? 20 years? His flashlights aren't dead. But if time doesn't move forward, they never will, will they? He pointed his flashlight floor by ceiling as he climbed through the tunnel. He didn't want to break his head, but he didn't want to fall into a bottomless crevice. He had already entered some deep puss, and his worn boots were soaked and cold. The worst part was boredom. A poor childhood in west Virginia left Maura with strong self-confidence, high discomfort and a black sense of humour. But that's monotonous. This was To tell a joke when you were alone. The only sign that Maura could move somewhere was that she sometimes forgot who she was looking for down here. Artemus is the goal, he reminded himself. 17 years earlier, he let Calla convince him he was just going to run away. Maybe he wanted to be convinced. Deep down, he knew it was part of something bigger. He knew it was a bigger part of it. Probably. So far, he's only found doubt in this tunnel. This wasn't the place the sun-worshiper Artemus would have ever chosen. He had half the idea that this was the place where a man like Artemus would die. He was starting to feel bad about the letter he left behind. He read it in its entirety: Glendower is underground. So am I. At the time, he felt quite complacent; the note was intended to enraify and inspire, depending on who read it. Of course, he wrote that he thought he'd be back the next day. She reviewed now in her mind: Go to timeless caves to look for her ex-boyfriend. If it looks like I'm going to miss Blue's graduation, send me help. P.E., pies aren't food. He kept going. It was inky black in front of us and behind ink black. The sweep of his flashlight illuminated details: truncated stalns on uneven ceilings. There was water on the walls. But it wasn't lost because there was only one possibility: deeper and deeper. He wasn't afraid yet. It took a long time to scare someone who played in time and space like a bathtub. Maura used a muddy stalagmite as a handrail and dragged herself through a narrow opening. The scene across the way was confusing. The ceiling was dreated; the floor was a thorn; it was infinite; it was impossible. Then a little dripping water unspooled ripples through the image, momentarily ruining the illusion. It was an underground lake. The dark surface reflected the golden stones on the ceiling, making it seem as if the same number of stalagmites jabbed up at the bottom of the lake. The real bottom of the lake was hidden. Water can be two inches, two feet, no depth. Ah. So he was here, finally. That's what he dreamed of. He still wasn't completely afraid, but his heart jumped out uneasily. Page 2, I could go home. I know the way. But if Mr. Gray had been willing to risk his life for what he wanted, he could surely be so brave. He was wondering if he was alive. He was surprised at how much he hoped it was him. He reworked the note in his head. I'm going to timeless caves to find her ex-boyfriend. If it looks like I'm going to miss Blue's graduation, send me help. P.E.Pie is still not food. P.P.S. Don't forget to take the car in for the oil change. P.P.P.S. Look for me at the bottom of a mirrored lake. A voice whispered in his ear. Someone from the future or the past. Someone lives or lives or sleeps. It wasn't really a Maura found out. He was just lame. The voice of someone who's been calling for me for a long time without an answer. Maura was a good listener. What did you say? Asked. He whispered again, Find me. It wasn't Artemus. It was someone else who got lost, or got lost, or got lost. In these caves, time was not a line; it was a mirrored lake. P.P.P.P.S. Don't wake the third sleeper. 1 Do you think this is really real? Blue asked. They sat among the rising oaks under a stolen summer sky. Roots and rocks tucked up the moist soil around them. The foggy air wasn't like the overkn overly autumn cold they just left behind. They craved summer, so Cabeswater gave them the summer. Richard Gansey III lay on his back, staring at the warm blue above the branches. In his khaki and citrus-yellow V-neck sweater, he drated and looked boisterous, throwing him out, the sensual heir to the forest around him. What's real? Blue said, Maybe we'll all come here, fall asleep, and have the same dream. He knew that wasn't true, but it was both comforting and exciting to imagine that it was so connected that Cabeswater represented something they all thought of when they closed their eyes. I know when I'm awake and when I'm asleep, Ronan Lynch said. If everything around Gansey was soft-edged and organic, faded and homogeneous, Ronan was sharp, dark and dissonant, standing out of the woods in sharp relief. Adam Parrish, curled up with a pair of shabby, greasy leg hairs, asked: You? Ronan despised or grinned badly. He was like Cabeswater: creator of dreams. If he didn't know the difference between waking up and sleeping, it was because the difference didn't matter to him. Maybe I dreamt it, he said. Thanks for the straight teeth then, Adam replied. Around them, Cabeswater hummed and mumbled like. The birds that didn't exist outside the woods were flapping over their heads. Somewhere nearby, the water gassed through rocks. The trees were big and old, covered with moss and lichen. Maybe it's because he knew the forest was a sensory one, but Blue thought it seemed wise. If he let his mind wander far enough, he could almost feel the feeling of the forest listening to him. It was hard to explain; it was like the feeling of someone hovering your hand over your skin, not really touching it. Adam said: We have to gain Cabeswater's trust before we go into the cave. Blue didn't understand what it meant for Adam to be so attached to the forest that he promised to have his hands and eyes. He suspected Adam sometimes didn't. But on his advice, the group returned again and again into the woods, walking through the trees, exploring carefully, taking nothing. Walking in the cave, which can be kept both - and Maura. Mother. The letter, which he had left more than a month earlier, did not indicate when he intended to return. It didn't say if he wanted to come back at all. So it was impossible to tell if he was still gone because he was in trouble or because he didn't want to come home. Other people's mothers disappeared into the ground during their midlife crisis? I don't dream, said Noah Czerny. He was dead, so he probably didn't sleep either. I think it has to be real. It's real, but it's theirs, it's theirs. A few more minutes, hours, or days — what was the time? - they were lazy. A little away from the group, Ronan's younger brother, Matthew, wagging their mother, Aurora, rejoiced in this visit. The two were golden-haired and angelic, both of them looking like inventions of this place. Blue longed to hate Aurora because of her origins - literally dreamed up by her husband - and because she had the attention span and intellectual prowess of a puppy. But the truth was that he was infinitely kind and cheerful, as compulsively lovable as his youngest son. He wouldn't have left his daughter before senior year. The most infuriating part of Maura's disappearance was that Blue didn't know if she was consumed by worry or anger. He fluctuated wildly between the two, sometimes burned himself out, and felt nothing at all. How could he do this to me? Blue lay his face facing a rock covered with warm moss, trying to keep his thoughts well and pleasant. The same ability that amplified clairvoyance, amplified Cabeswater's strange magic, and he didn't want to cause another earthquake or cause panic. Instead, he started talking to the trees. He thought birds were singing - thought, or desired, or longed for, or dreamed of. It was a thought turned to the side, a door left cracked in his head. He told me more and more when he did it right. A strange bird trilled high and off-key over it. He thought longed-for-dreamed leaves were snouting. The trees have sedated their leaves, creating vague, whispered words. Avide audimus. He meant spring flowers. A lily, blue, like its name. A blue petal fell aimlessly into her hair. Another fell on his palm and slid down his wrist like a kiss. Gansey's eyes opened as the petals easily reached his face. As his lips parted, he became more and more amazed, this game landed directly on his mouth. Adam dared his head back to watch the floral, fragrant rain drift down around them, slow motion butterflies in blue. Blue's heart exploded with angry joy. It's real, it's real, it's real - Ronan looked blue, eyes narrowed. He didn't look away. He sometimes played this game with Ronan Lynch: Who would look away first? It was always a draw. He has changed the and now Blue felt less unequal in the group. Not because he knew Ronan better, but because he felt gansey and adam were less familiar with him now. He challenged them to learn again. Gansey pushed himself to his elbow; petals fell from it, as if waking up from a long dream. Okay, that's it. I think it's time. Lynch? He rose, and stood proudly with his mother and brother; Matthew, who waved his arms like a performing bear, was quiet. Aurora stroked Ronan's hand, which Ronan authorized. Up, he told Matthew. It's time to go. Aurora smiled gently at her sons. He stayed here in Cabeswater and did what his dreams did when no one was there to see them. It was no surprise that Blue would fall asleep immediately if he left the forest; it was impossible to imagine Aurora existing in the real world. It's even more impossible to imagine you growing up with a mother like her. My mother wouldn't go away forever. Right? Ronan put his hand on both sides of Matthew's head, smashed the blonde curls and locked his brother's gaze on his. Go and wait in the car, he said. If we're not back by 9:00, call Blue's house. Matthew's expression was pleasant and he wasn't afraid. His eyes were as blue as Ronan's, but they were more innocent. How will I know the number? Ronan continued to clasp his brother's head. Matthew. Focus. We've been over this. I want you to think. Tell me, how do you know the number? His brother laughed a little and scavezed his pocket. Oh, yes. It's programmed into your phone. Now I remember. I'll stay with him, Noah offered at the same time. Chicken, said Ronan ungrateful. Lynch, said Gansey. That's a good idea, Noah, if you feel like you're up to it. Noah, as a ghost, needed external energy to remain visible. Both the Blue and the Ley lines were powerful spiritual elements; waiting in the car parked nearby should have been more than enough. But sometimes it's not the energy that does Noah - it was his courage. He will be the champion, Blue said, fisting Noah's arm with ease. I will be a champion, repeated Noah. The forest was waiting, watching, snouting. The edge of the sky was grayer than the blue directly above their heads than Cabeswater's attention was so closely focused on them that the real world is now able to penetrate. At the mouth of the cave, Gansey said. But fumo in the flammam. The smoke in the fire, Adam translated Blue. In the cave. In the cave. Everything in Cabeswater was magical, but the cave was unusual because it didn't exist when the forest was first discovered. Or maybe it existed, but in another place. Gansey said equipment check. Blue threw out the contents of his tagged backpack. Helmets (bicycles, used), knee pads (roller skates, used) and (miniature, used) rolled out as well as a pink switchblade. As he began applying these things to his body, Gansey emptied his messenger bag next to him. He included a helmet (caving, used), knee pads (caving, used), and a flashlight (Maglite, used), as well as several lengths of new rope, harness, and assorted screw anchors and metal carabiner. Blue and Adam were staring at the equipment they were using. It seemed impossible that Richard Campbell Gansey III would have thought he was buying anything other than the brand-new one. Gansey, not caring about their attention, effortlessly tied a carabiner to a rope with a perfect knot. Blue got it a moment before Adam. The device was used because Gansey used it. Sometimes it was hard to remember that he lived a life before they met him. Gansey started loosening a longer safety cable. What we talked about. We're tied together, three tractors, if you get scared in the slightest. Time check? Adam checked his shabby watch. My watch isn't working. Ronan checked his precious black and shook his head. Although this was not unexpected, Blue is still disturbed, the dragon cut free. Gansey frowned as if he had shared his thoughts. Neither is my phone. Okay, Ronan. As Ronan cried Latin in the air, Adam whispered to Blue if it was safe to go in? And my mother's still in there? The answer came in the form of sympathy leaves and guttural scraping, wilder than the sounds Blue had heard before. Greywaren semper est incorruptus. Always safe, Gansey translated quickly, eager to prove that he wasn't completely useless when it came to Latin. Greywaren is always safe. Greywaren was Ronan. Whatever they were in these woods, Ronan got it better. Adam, said a smudger, Incorrupt. I never thought anyone would use that word to describe Lynch. Ronan seemed as pleased as a viper. What do you want from us? Blue was amazed as he entered. How do you see us? Only four teenagers sneak into an ancient forest. There was a strange, quiet earth room inside the cave entrance. The walls were dust and rock, roots and chalk, all the colors of Adam's hair and skin. Blue touched the reluctantly wavy fern, the last foliage, before the sunlight faded. Adam turned his head, watched, but it was just the dull, ordinary sound of their footsteps. Gansey turned on his headlight. It barely tressed through the darkness of the narrowing tunnel. One of the boys was shaking a little. Blue didn't know it was Adam or Ronan, but he could feel the cable shaking on his belt. I wish we'd brought Noah, said Gansey suddenly. We're going in. Ronan, don't forget to set the direction indicators on the fly. We're counting on you. Don't just stare at me. Nod, as you understand. Good. You know what? Give it to Jane. What's going on? It sounded like he'd been betrayed. Blue accepted the markers - round, plastic plates with arrow keys drawn on them. He did not realize how nervous he was until he had it in his hand; it felt good to have something concrete to do. I want you to whistle, buzz or sing, Ronan, and keep track of time, Gansey said. You have to shit on me, Ronan replied. Gansey looked down at the tunnel. I know you know a lot of songs all along and do them at the same speed and long all the time. Because you had to memorize all the melodies for the Irish music competitions. Blue and Adam were happy to look at the look. The only thing more pleasant than seeing Ronan call him was that I saw him highlighted and forced him to sing an Irish jig several times. Piss on a rope, Ronan said. Gansey, not of any anith me, waited. Ronan shook his head, but then, with an evil smile, he started singing. Squash one, squash two, s- Not one, both Adam and Gansey said. I don't listen to this for three hours, said Adam. Gansey pointed to Ronan until he started breathing. And they went deeper. Deeper. The sun is gone. The roots gave it to the lestals. The air was wet and smelled familiar. The walls scented like something alive. From time to time, Blue and the others had to curse pools and streams - the narrow, uneven path was carved by water, and the water was still doing this job. Page 3 Ronan rolls around ten times, Blue deposited a marker. As the amount of chips in his hand dropped, he wondered how far they were going, how they knew if they were even close. It was hard to believe there was a king hiding down here. It's even harder to imagine her mother being. This wasn't a place to live. It calmed his thoughts. There's no earthquake. They don't have any. He tried not for long, or to hope, to think, or to call Maura. The last thing he wanted was Cabeswater to make him a copy of his mother. He just wanted the right one. The truth. It's getting steeper. The darkness itself was tiring; Blue longed for light, space, sky. He felt buried alive. Adam slipped and caught you with his hands outstretched. Hey, I'm sorry. They're feeding him blue. Don't touch the walls. Ronan whistlingly asked. Cave bacteria? It's bad for stynatic growth. Oh, honestly - Ronan! Gansey, at the front of the line, did not turn, and his canary sweater turned light grey. Back to work. Ronan only started whistling when Gansey disappeared. What's going on? Adam asked. Then they took him from his feet. Slammed the ground and slipped on the side, fingers closing. Blue didn't have time to figure out what that meant when he felt Ronan grab him from behind. Then the rope was tightly stuck around his waist, to pull it off his feet. But he was well implanted. His fingers were rooted so tightly in his arms, they hurt. Adam was still on the ground, but he didn't slide anymore. Gansey, what's going on? - cried the word dolorful in the vast space beyond. Are you all right down there? Because Gansey didn't just disappear, he fell into a hole. Thank God we were connected, Blue thought. Ronan's arms were still around him; he felt them trembling. He didn't know if it was muscle pull or worry. He didn't even hesitate before grabbing her. I can't let myself forget that. Gansey, what's going on? Adam repeated it, and there was something terrible behind it. He was too confident because of his anxiety to be invisible. Three tow trucks. Blue felt them shudder through Adam to him. Adam put his face in the mud with visible relief. What's going on? Ronan asked. Where is he? I'm sure it's ananakti. Adam replied, leaving with uncertainty that Henrietta's accent would snatch the last G away from hanging. The rope cuts in half, pulls so hard. I can't get any closer to help. It's slimy - its weight just tightens it. Freeing himself from Ronan's arms, Blue took an experimental step closer to Gansey's whereabouts. The rope between him and Adam loosened, but he didn't slip any closer to the hole. Slowly he said, I think there could be a counterweight if you don't move, Adam. Ronan, stay here - if anything happens and I start to slide, can you anchor yourself? Ronan's headlights pointed to a muddy spot. Nodded. Okay, he said. I'm going to go over there and check it out. It slowly snated past Adam. His fingers were hung in the sloppy ground next to his face. He almost fell into the hole. No wonder Gansey didn't see it. There was a rock ledge, and then, just - nothing. He swept his headlights back and forth, and all he saw was inky black. The gap was too wide to see the other side. It's too deep to see the bottom. The safety rope, however, was dark, muddy, leading to the pit. Blue glittered with a flashlight in black. Gansey, what's going on? I'm right here. Gansey's voice was closer than he expected. It's quieter than you expected. I'm just... I think I'm having a panic attack. Are you having a panic attack? New rule: Everyone has to give four tow trucks before suddenly disappearing. Did something break? Long break. No, no, no, no, no, the tone of the only word conveyed at the same time that he wasn't joking about his fear. Blue wasn't sure if reasking was his strong suit, especially when he wanted it, but he tried. It's going to be okay. We're anchored here. All you have to do is get out. You're not going to fall. That's not what this is about. His voice was a splinter. I have something in my and it reminds me ... Missed. Or mud. It's everywhere. Tell me something else so I can point the flashlight at you. There was nothing but the sound of his breathing, jagged and scared. He swept through the flashlight again. Or mosquitoes. Mosquitoes are everywhere, he said, sound bright. He didn't answer. There are more than two dozen species of cave beetles, he added. I read it before we left today. Gansey whispered. Wasp. His heart contracted. In the washing of adrenaline, he talked himself out of it. Yes, the wasp can spew gansey with a stinger, but no, there were no wasps in this cave. And today wasn't the day Gansey was going to die because he saw his soul the day he died, and that ghost was wearing an Aglonby sweater splattered with rain. Not a pair of khakis and a cheerful yellow V-neck. His flashlight finally found him. He hung a lycly in his harness, his head bowed, his hands above his ears. His flashlight tracked his shoulders. They were splashed with mud and dirt, but they didn't have insects on them. He could breathe again. Look at me, he ordered. There are no wasps. I know, he muttered. That's why I said I thought I was having a panic attack. I know there are no wasps. What he didn't say, but what they both knew, was that Cabeswater was a cautious listener. Which meant he didn't have to think about wasps. Well, you made me angry, Blue said. Adam's lysing in the mud for you. Ronan's going home. Gansey laughed out loud. Keep talking, Jane. I don't want to. I want you to grab the rope and pull yourself up here as soon as I know you can do it perfectly. What good is it to talk? He looked up at her, and then her face was striped and unrecognizable. There's just something underneath me, and your voice is suppressing it. A nasty shudder went down Blue's spine. Cabeswater was such a good listener. Ronan, shouted softly over his shoulder. New plan: Adam and I are going to pull Gansey out very quickly. What is it, what is it? It's a f**king terrible idea, Ronan said. Why this plan? Blue didn't want to shout it out loud. Adam, however, listened, and said softly and clearly: Adad is the liquid of foramen. I don't know. Ap? Apibus? Forstian, I'm sorry. Latin hid nothing from Cabeswater; They were just trying to spare Gansey. No, Ronan said. No, I don't. That's not what's down there. Gansey closed his eyes. I saw him, Blue thought. I saw his soul when he died, and he wasn't wearing it. That's not how it happens. It's not now, it's later, it's later - Ronan kept going, his voice louder. No, no, no, no, no, can you hear me, Cabeswater? You promised to protect me. Who are we to you? If you let him die, it won't keep me safe. You get it? If they die, I die. Now Blue could hear the buzzing sound from the pit. Adam spoke, the sound half dull from the mud. I made a deal with you, Cabeswater. I'm your hand and your eyes. What do you think I'm going to see when he dies? The snout has increased. It sounded a lot. It's not hornets, blue thought, desired, longed for, dreamed. Who are we to you, Cabeswater? Who am I to you? He said out loud: We've made the Ley line stronger. We've made you stronger. And we're going to keep helping you, but you've got to help us - Blackness ate his flashlight, rising from the depths. The sound exploded. Buzzed; it was wings. They filled the hole, hiding Gansey. Gansey, I'm sorry, Blue was yelling, or maybe it was Adam, or maybe it was Ronan. Then something hit him in the face, and one more thing. It's a body that's been pinned down against a wall. Off the ceiling. The beams of the headlights were cut into thousands of flashing pieces. The sound of their wings. The voice. He's not a wasp. Bats? No, Ravens. This wasn't the place where the ravens lived, and the ravens didn't act like that. But they exploded and broke out of the pit beneath Gansey. The flock never seemed to end. Blue was the disturbing feeling that has always been so, ravens coursing around them, feathers brushing their faces, claws scraping over his helmet. Then all of a sudden, the ravens started shouting, back and forth, back and forth. More and more vocals and then resolved into words. Rex Corvus, parate Regis Corvi. The Raven King, make way for the Raven King. Feathers fell down as the birds careened toward the cave mouth. Blue's heart was out of the way of how big it was at this moment, and that's it. Then there was silence, or at least not enough sound, to make Blue's trembling heart heard. The feathers were shaking in the mud next to Adam. Wait, Gansey said. I'm coming out. 2 Adam Parrish was lonely. There's no good word for the opposite of lonely. You may be tempted to suggest togetherness or satisfaction, but the fact that these two other words bear definitions independent of each other perfectly shows why loneliness can't be properly reflected. This is not to say loneliness, neither alone nor lonely, although loneliness may contain all these words pers none. Lonesome means the state of separation. That I'm different. Alone, some. Adam wasn't always alone, but he was always lonely. Even in a group, he slowly perfected the ability to keep himself separate. It was easier than we expected; The others allowed him to do it. He knew he was different as he was better suited to the Ley line this summer. He was himself, but he was stronger. He's himself, but he's less human. If it was them, he'd quietly watch him leave. It was better this way. He didn't fight. anyone for so long. He hasn't been angry in weeks. Now, the day after they went into the ravens' den, Adam drove his little, shitty car away from Henrietta on his way to Cabeswater's work. Through the soles of his shoes, he felt the slow pulse of the Ley line. If he didn't focus on it, his heartbeat was unconsciously synchronized with him. There was something reassuring and uneasy about the way it was now intertwined; he could no longer tell if he was just a strong friend, or if he was power now. Adam looked carefully at the gas meter. The car will be back, he thought, if you don't have to go too far into the autumn mountains. He didn't know what to do for Cabeswater yet. His needs came to him on restless nights and twining days, slowly becoming visible as something floating on the surface of a lake. The current feeling, a nagging sense of unfinishedness, wasn't really clear yet, but the school was about to begin and she hoped to get it taken care of before classes started. That morning, he lined his sink with tin foil, filled it with water, and spardled for clarification. All he could see was a blurry place. The rest will come to me when I'm closer. Probably. Instead, however, as he approached, his mind kept drifting back to Gansey's voice in the cave the day before. The treming sound in it. Fear - fear is so deep that Gansey couldn't bring himself to climb out of the pit, although physically nothing prevented him. He didn't know Richard Gansey thought he was a coward in III. Adam remembered squatting on his parents' kitchen floor and telling himself to buy Gansey's much-repeated advice to leave. Just put what you need in the car, Adam. But he stayed. He hung in the pit of his father's wrath. And he's a coward. Adam felt the need to restructure every conversation he had with Gansey in light of this new knowledge. As the entrance to Skyline Drive came into view, his thoughts suddenly switched to Cabeswater. Adam wasn't in the park, but he knew from Henrietta's life that it was a national park stretching along the Blue Ridge Mountains and following the ley line with almost gruesome precision. Before that, three lanes were fed into three snot-brown booths. There was a short line of cars waiting. His gaze found the prize plate. He didn't realize he had to pay to enter. \$15. Although he could not pinpoint the exact location of Cabeswater's task, he was confident it was on the other side of the pay-per-side cabs. There was no other way. But he also knew his pockets, and it wasn't \$15. I'll come back another time. He's so tired of doing things differently, in a different way, in a cheaper way, one day when Gansey was able to get his edges in order. That's how it was supposed to be. He could do it on his own, like the magician, touching the Ley line. But the Ley line couldn't get him through the toll mall. If Gansey had been here, he would have easily thrown the bills out of the Camaro. He wouldn't even have thought about it. One day, Adam thought. One day. As he got in line, he ripped out his wallet, and when he couldn't produce enough, he started digging after the change during the sessions. It was a moment that would have been easier and worse if it had been with Gansey, Ronan and Blue. Since then ious should have been created, the haves assured them that there was no need to be repaid, the have-nots insist that they were. Page 4 But since it was only Adam, a lonely Adam, he looked only silently at the small amount he had managed to scrape together. \$12.38. He didn't beg in the booth. He didn't have much except some damn dignity, and he couldn't bring himself to pass it through the driver's side window. It has to be another day. He didn't get angry. There was no one I could have been mad at. He leaned back with his head in front of the driver's side window for just a moment, then pulled it out of line and leaned on his shoulder to turn around. As he did, his attention to the vehicles is still in line. Two cars were exactly what Adam might imagine: a minivan with a young family, a sedan with a laughing, college-aged couple. But the third car wasn't quite right. It was a rental car - he saw the barcode sticker in the corner of the windshield. Maybe that wasn't weird; a tourist can fly and visit the park. But on the dashboard, there was a device adam knew very well: an electromagnetic frequency scanner. Another device was sitting next to him, although he wasn't sure what it was. Maybe it's a geophone. The kind of device Gansey and the others used to hunt the Ley Line. The kind they used to find Cabeswater. Then he blinked, and the dashboard of the car was empty. It's always been empty. It was just a rental car with a bored family in it. A month ago, Adam wouldn't understand why he was seeing things that weren't real. But now he knew Cabeswater better and understood that what he was seeing now was real - just real in another place, or at another time. Someone else came to Henrietta's to find the Ley line. 3 Mapey's neat downer, Blue said, how far he goes. How far are you going? Gansey demanded it. He replayed his words, but they remained meaningless. Lynch, don't take this down. It has been several days since the trip to the cave of ravens, and now it is on its way to the airport to pick up Dr Roger Malory, international Ley Line expert and elderly mentor at Gansey's. Ronan was in the passenger seat. Adam slammed into a window in the back, his mouth in the unrensensed sleep of the exhausted. Blue sat behind Gansey, clutching his head support space to be heard. This car, he said. Gansey knew that the reliable and powerful Suburban would have been a more logical choice for the trip, but he wanted the old Camaro to be the first thing the professor saw, not the expensive new SUV. The Camaro was shorthand for the person he became, and more than anything, he wanted Malory to feel that person was worth the trip. The professor didn't fly, but he flew 3,000 miles for it. Gansey could not decipher how to reciprocate such kindness, especially given the circumstances in which he left England. I said maybe we should descend into the pit you helpfully found. Blue's voice was paced with the engine, and Ronan's still offensive electronics. It seemed impossible for Adam to sleep through it. I just don't - Ronan. My ears are bleeding! Ronan turned down the music. Gansey started again. I can't imagine why Glendower's men are tired of letting him in that hole. I just can't, Jane. Even thinking about the pit made long ago poison buzz and burn in the throat; easily summoned the image of warning striped insects lurking thin skin between their fingers. He almost forgot how terrible and fascinating it was to re-live the moment. Watch the road, Gansey. Maybe it's another hole, he suggested. The collapsed top of a lower cave. If that's true, we need to get through it, not in it. Ronan and I have to climb the walls like spiders. Unless you and Adam have rock climbing experience, I don't know about it. Outside the car, Washington, D.C., slunk closer; the deep blue sky grew smaller. The widening interstate has increased railings, street lights, BMWs, airport taxis. In the rearview mirror, Gansey saw a corner of Blue's face. Her wide awake gaze snagged something outside, fast, and she was craned to look out the window as if it were a different country. That's what it was. He was, as always, a reluctantly returning abroad. He felt pain, he felt a desire to run, and that surprised him. It's been a long time. Blue said: Ronan can dream us a bridge. Ronan has made a global encyclical. Don't just suck on me. Tell me why you don't. You're a magical creature. Why can't you do magic? With acid accuracy, Ronan replied: For starters, I need to sleep there in the pit, as I need touching something to pull out a dream. And I need to know what was on the other side so I know what kind of bridge to make. And even if I took all this off, if I took something this big out of my dream, it would suck out the Ley line, it would probably make Cabeswater disappear again, this time with us, and send us all to something never-ever-earth. f**kery that you might never escape. I thought that after the events of the summer, all this was self-evident, which is why I put it together earlier, Ronan said of the noise of glorious disdain. Thanks for the super useful alternative suggestions, Ronan Lynch. Your contribution at the end of the world will be talked accordingly, Blue said. He turned his attention back to Gansey and insisted, so what? It has to be important, or Cabeswater wouldn't have shown it to us. Gansey says that assumes Cabeswater's priorities are the same as ours. He said out loud: We'll find another way in. One that leads us from the other side to the hole. Since this is not a normal cave - it's all tied to the Ley line - Malory can help us. He couldn't believe Malory was really here. He spent almost a year with the professor, the longest time he's been anywhere, and he felt like there would never be a time when he wasn't looking. Now he looked into a narrowing grave, and somewhere in that vast darkness was glendower and the end. Gansey felt off-kilter; time played nervous fast forward. In the rearview mirror, he accidentally caught a glimpse of Blue's eyes. Oddly enough, he saw his own thoughts reflected on his face: excitement and dismay. Coincidentally, in front of Ronan, convinced that Adam was still asleep, Gansey swayed his hand between the driver's seat and the door. Palms up, fingers dating back to blue. That wasn't allowed. He knew he wasn't supposed to do that. He could not afford to play favorites between Adam and Ronan; He and Blue couldn't play favorites like that. He wouldn't see the gesture anyway. He'd ignore it if he did. His heart was humming. Blue touched his fingers. Just this - He pinched his fingers lightly, just for a moment, then pulled his hand out and put it back on the wheel. His chest was warm. That wasn't allowed. Ronan didn't see it; Adam was still asleep. The only victim was his pulse. The exit, dick! Ronan's crazy. Or Dick. It could have been, really. Gansey steered in a hurry. Adam blinked awake. Ronan swore. Gansey's heart restarted. Watch the road, Gansey. At the airport, the professor didn't wait in the outdoor check-in area, as we discussed, and he didn't answer his phone. He was eventually found next to the luggage carousel, next to a group of people talking, a baggage tower and an irritable-looking service dog. It looked exactly like Gansey remembered it. He had some kind of turtle in his respect, and it wasn't just one jaw, it was another one standing behind him. His nose and ears were made of rubber intelligently. The round bags under his eyes perfectly mirrored his round eyebrow lines. The look on his face is confused. Mr Malory, I'm sorry, said he was happy to. Oh, my God, Ronan said under his breath. He's so old. Adam hit Ronan, saving Gansey trouble. Gansey, said Malory, clasped his hands with him. What a relief. I'm terribly sorry to keep you waiting, I called. My damn phone. The battery on these things is rubbish. It's like a conspiracy to sell us something. Hypotenuse, probably. Are planes always like this? So full of people? I'm afraid so, Gansey said. From the corner of his eye, he noticed that Adam was not entirely Adam in relation to Malory, his head was a tucked-up, pensive concentration in his eyes. Gansey rushed in a bewildered hurry. Let me introduce you. These are my friends Ronan, Adam Parrish and Jane. Adam's expression was focused. It's adam-like. He blinked at Gansey. Blue, blue corrected. Oh, yes, you're blue, Malory agreed. How thoughtful of you. What was his name? Jane? That's the lady I spoke to on the phone months ago, right? It's so small. Are you done growing? What is that? Blue told me. Gansey felt it was time to remove Malory from the terminal. Which one of these is your bag? All of them, Malory said tragically. Ronan did everything he could to catch Gansey's eye, but Gansey wouldn't let him. The teens picked up the bags. The service dog is up. Blue, a friend of all blood teds, said, Wow, my friend. You stay here. Oh, no, Malory objected. The dog is mine. They looked at the Dog. He wore a smart blue vest that advertised his usefulness without further details. Okay, Gansey said. He avoided another sensible look for Ronan. On the curb, we all stopped by Malory to remove the dog vest and then watched the dog relieve himself of the sign of the rental car shuttle. Ronan asked, What's a dog for? Malory's turtle's tortoise is very small. He's a service animal. What kind of service do you provide? Excuse me, Malory replied. Gansey avoided a third meaningful look from both Adam and Malory. They've reached the car, which hasn't got any bigger since they entered the terminal. Gansey didn't like to be so directly confronted with the consequences of his folly. Ladies and gentlemen, my trick today will be to take this 1973 Camaro, except for the spare tire from the trunk, Gansey left it by a street light. The price of Malory's visit. - and fits five people, a dog, and a hell of a lot of luggage inside. After completing this magic trick, he sat in the driver's seat. The dog was panting anxiously. Gansey knew what it felt like. Can I pet him? Is that him? Blue asked. Yes, Malory replied. But you're not going to enjoy it. He's very tense. Gansey allowed Blue to look at her in the rearview mirror as they returned to The food on the plane was appalling; It's amazing the staff didn't die from bleeding ulcers, said Malory. He hit Gansey's arm so suddenly, both Gansey and the Dog were surprised. Do you know anything about the draperies the English lost in Mawddwy? Lambrequin? Oh, was it red-handed women? I thought they decided it was a flag, gansey said. Yes, yes, it's the real thing. You're good! Gansey thought it was no better than what you'd expect after seven years of fairly purposeful learning, but he appreciated the feeling. He raised his voice to include the back seat in the conversation. It's actually very interesting. The English chased some of Glendower's men, and although they left, the English caught this ancient draperia. Flag, whatever. Red hands are interesting because red hands are associated with Mab Darogan, a mythical title. It was given to people like King Arthur and Llewellyn, the great, and of course Owain Lawgoch - Of course, echoed Ronan sarcastically. Of course it's Owain Lawgoch. Don't be such a scumbag, Adam murmured. This lane ends, Blue said. That's right, said Gansey, merging. Besides, Mab Darogan was a kind of Welsh 'Son of Destiny.' Malory broke in, blame the poets. It's easier to start a riot if they think they're on the side of a half-god or a chosen one. Never trust a poet. They - Gansey interrupted, the flag was destroyed, right? Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't mean to cut you off. That's totally fine, Malory said, and it sounded like it was more than okay. This - plucking strands from the narrow weave of history - was a common ground. Gansey was relieved to discover that their relationship was still intact, based only on a very different foundation than his relationship with the people currently in the back seat. As Honda blew them away, the occupants put Gansey on his finger, the professor continued: This was actually thought destroyed. They remodeled it, really. Skidmore wrote that it became Henrik's fourth nightly, although I couldn't find his sources. Nightly! Why nightly? Gansey said, For maximum infamy. No one knows what shame means, Gansey, muttered Adam. Shame, deliveredmalory. The destruction of dignity. It's like flying. But the draperia was actually only redied last week. Gansey swerved. You're kidding! Page 5 It's in terrible condition – textiles don't keep it nicely, as you well know. And it took them forever to figure out what it was. Now get off at the exit, Gansey, to show you this. Strange coincidence, the draperia was found under a barn in Kirtling. The flood cut a deep path through the topsoil, which revealed the older foundation. Meters and meters away from the contamination. Adam asked: Did all that water not destroy the flag? The professor turns around. That's exactly the question. A trick of physics, water did not fill the foundation, but managed to cut a separate course slightly upwards! And in answer to your question, yes! The barn was on a ley line. That was the question I wanted to ask, ronan said. Ronan, Blue said, don't be such a piece of shit. Gansey caught a corner of Adam's laughter in the rearview mirror as he drove into a parking lot at a dragged gas station. Malory made an old digital camera somewhere in her person and is now clicking back on the photos on it. They're now blaming the flood for a flash thunderstorm or something like that. But the people who were there say it's because the barn walls were crying. She was crying! It was impossible to tell if he was horrified or delighted. What do you think? Gansey asked. In response, Malory simply handed him the camera. Gansey looked at the window. Oh, he said. In the photo, a badly degraded textile painted three women, each in simple capes at the same time long before Glendower. They stood in identical poses, raising their hands to both sides of their heads, palms of bloodied red proclaiming Mab Darogan. They were both wearing Blue Sergeant's face. Impossible. But no, I'm not. Nothing's been impossible these days. She zoomed in on the photo for a better look. Blue's wide eyes looked back at him. Stylized, yes, but still, the resemblance was gruesome: questionable eyebrows, curious mouth. He put a snot to his ear as the wasp sped in his ear. He suddenly flooded his seat, as he had not been there for a long time, with the memory of the voice in his head as his life was saved. You're going to live for Glendower. Someone else on the Ley line is dying when he shouldn't be, and he's going to live like this when he shouldn't. He was full of meeting Glendower himself, touching his hand, kneel in front of him, thanking him for being him. Hands reach from behind; He didn't know whose it was. He let them take the camera. The blue murmured about something he didn't catch, Adam whispered, He looks like you. Which? Each. Fuck. Ronan said, voicing all their thoughts. The photo is so close, Gansey said eventually. The quality is excellent. Of course, replied Malory. Don't you understand? This is the barn outside my cabin. I saw the tears. My team found the draperia. Gansey struggled to put this together. How did you know you had to look there? That's it, Gansey, that's the thing. I wasn't looking for anything. I was on a well-deserved vacation. After the summer I fought the wretched Simmons' neighbor over his wild animals, question, I desperately need some time away. I assure you, my presence in Kirtling was accidental. Coincidence, echoed Adam, is insensiable. What was that thing, this huge thing? Gansey lived forward and with fear. His greatness was like the black pit in the cave - he could not see the bottom or the other side. I must say, Gansey, said Malory brightly. I'm so excited to meet your ley line. 4 Blue couldn't sleep that night. He couldn't stop waiting for the sound of the front door. Some ingrained, stupid parts couldn't believe her mother wouldn't come home before school started tomorrow. His mother always had an answer for everything, even if it was wrong, and Blue took it for granted that he would be unchanged as everything else turned sideways. Blue missed him. He went out into the hallway and kept quiet. Outside, Orla was holding a midnight scaking with some enthusiastic clients. Downstairs, Calla watched tv alone angrily. On his floor he heard nothing, nothing - and then a series of short, purposeful sighs from Persephone's room at the end of the hall. When he knocked, Persephone said in his tiny voice: You might as well do it. Inside, the lamplight reached only a shoddy little table and the end of Persephone's lat, elderly twin bed. Perky sat cross-legged in the Victorian desk chair, her huge nimbus curly hair lit in gold with the only bulb. He worked in an old sweater. As Blue climbed onto the shabby mattress, several thread slurs raced to get his ass barefoot. She yanked her oversized shirt off her knees and watched Persephone for a few minutes. It appeared to add length to the sleeves by sewing the inappropriate cuffs. Every so often, he sighed as if annoyed himself or his sweater. Is this yours? Blue asked. What's mine? Persephone followed his eyes to the sweater. Oh, it's not my fault. Oh, no, I mean, it was. Once. But you see I'm changing it. Someone with huge, long arms? Persephone stretched out the dress to check if that was the case. Yes, yes, I'm sorry. Blue slowly line up the theme color on the bed next to it. You think mom was looking for Butternut? He's your father. Artemus, Persephone corrected. Or clarified. Butternut wasn't really Blue's father's name - it's a pet named Maura apparently given to him by Ye Olde Days. I think it's over-simple. Yes, that's one of the reasons he left. I thought you had a thing for Mr. Gray. Persephone is considered. The problem with your mother, Blue, is that she likes to touch things. We told him Artemus was a thing of the past. I said he made his decisions long before you did. But no, he had to keep on touching it. How can you expect something to heal if you keep telling me? so he ... Went... To... Get Her? Oh, no, no, no, no, no, no, Persephone said with a little laugh. I don't think it's - no. Like you said, he has a thing for Mr. Gray. Are you young people really saying that? I just told you. I'm young. Ish. Are you asking or not? Either you accept my authority, or we move on. We're moving on. But it's up to him if he wants to find her. You'll never be alone, and this is your chance to have some time for yourself. Maura didn't strike Blue as a time to make herself a person, but maybe that was the problem. So you're saying we shouldn't look any further. How am I supposed to know? You're a psychic! You ask people to tell you their future! Look to the future. Persephone looked blue with her all-black eyes until she felt a little unwell about her outburst, and then Persephone added: 'Maura

the country people. Piper said, I'm in the tub. But his voice came from the kitchen. His wife (although he didn't like to use that word, wife, because he made her think he was over 30 years old, but still, he didn't need to be reminded, and besides, he still had the boy-boy good looks; in fact, the cashier at the store flirted with him just last night, and while he might have been overaverly overdressed with a cheese-run cracker, he thought he was That's probably the akvamarin's eyes, because she's been practically swimming in them) took the step to make Henrietta better than she expected. So far, the only riot Piper has ever put forward was that she destroyed the rental car by aggressively driving through a mall sign to demonstrate how unfit she was to live in a place where she couldn't go to the shops. It's possible he didn't do it on purpose, but there were very few Pipers by accident. They are basically monsters, Greenmantle said, though they now have less though about cows and their new disciples. They've been receiving handouts all day, but they'll eat you in an instant if they have the right teeth. They just moved into their historic rent on a cattle farm. Greenmantle, who has made a lot of history, cast doubt on the historic claim of the farmhouse, but it was quite charming. He the idea of farming; in the most basic language sentence, he is now a farmer. They'll be here for your blood on Friday, piper called. The cows were curiously degraded. Greenmantle experimentally mirrored them; their expressions have not changed. They're here now. Not the cows. I'm getting you more life insurance, and they need your blood. Friday. Be here. He snuggled back and creaked into the kitchen. Piper was standing at the counter in a pink bra and underwear, chopping a mango. Her blonde hair was a curtain around her head. He didn't look up. I teach on Friday, he said. Think about the kids. How much life insurance do we need? I have a certain standard of living that I want to maintain if something terrible happens to you in the middle of the night. He stabbed her with the knife while stealing a piece of mango. The only reason he was able to get away from the wound was because of his speed, not his lack of intent. Just come back after class. Don't be thirsty like you used to. I'm not frittering, Greenmantle said. I'm pretty purposeful, yes, I know, getting revenge, doing testicles, whatnot. You can help me if you want. You're much better with directions and things. He couldn't completely hide that appeal from his ego he liked. I can't until Sunday. I have eyebrows on Wednesday. Bikini line on Thursday. Don't come home on Saturday. Fritter on Saturday. People come wise to the house. Greenmantle stole another piece of mango; The knife came a little closer this time. What does that mean? I saw a flyer. You have to get rid of the bad energy in one place. This house is full of it. It's just you. He threw the knife in the sink, where he stayed until death. Piper wasn't much for chores. He had very narrow skills. He drifted towards the bedroom, bathed on the road, naps, or started a war. Don't kill us. No one is going to kill us, Greenmantle said with certainty. The Grey Man knows the rules. And the others ... He rinsed the knife and put it back in the knife block. The rest of us what? He didn't realize he was still in the room. Oh, I just thought I saw one of Niall Lynch's sons today. Was he a jerk, too? Piper asked. Niall Lynch was responsible for seven moderately unpleasant and four extremely unpleasant months of their lives together. Probably. God, he looked just like that f**ker. I can't wait to let him down. I wonder if you know who I am. I wonder if I should tell him. You are such a sadist, he said, snrely. He hit his fist on the counter. I'm going to see which jaw those cows have teeth on. To the bottom. I saw it on Animal Planet. I'm still going. As he tried to call which door in the mud room, he heard her say something, but he didn't catch her. He's already dialed the number of a Belgian contact whose 15th-century phone number was used. It took the guy forever to invade him. Too bad he couldn't put the Grey Man on it. He was the best. Until you betrayed Greenmantle, of course. He wondered how long it would take for the Grey Man to come to him. 11 When Gansey and Ronan arrived at 300 Fox Way after school, Calla was being attacked in the living room by a man dressed completely in gray. Blue, Persephone, and the furniture was snating the walls. The man stood in perfect combat form, his legs a little wider than his shoulders, one foot ahead. He had a solid grip on one hand. Calla was holding a Manhattan in his other hand that he was trying not to tell. The Grey Man smiled thinly. He had extraordinary teeth. The boys entered without knocking, familiarly, and now Gansey had access to his messenger bag on the old buckle floor and stood at the living room door. He wasn't sure if the situation required intervention. The Grey Man was a (possibly retired) assassin. There's nothing to joke about. But if Calla had asked for help, I'm sure she'd have put her drink down. Blue certainly doesn't just eat yogurt. Show it again,' Calla said. I didn't see it, I don't think so. I'm going to do it a little harder, Mr. Gray replied, but I don't want to break your arm. He was nowhere near her, he assured her. Put your back in it. He tipped his Manhattan floor. He clasped his hands and wrists again, his skin pale against his, and he quickly turned his entire arm. His shoulders tilted sharply downwards; he grabbed his drink and chuckled. That's what I felt. Now do it to me, Mr. Gray said. I'll keep your drink. Gansey, reaching into his pocket, leaned against the doorway and watched. He instinctively knew that the terrible news he carried was the kind of burden that would only be harder if he shared it. For a moment before the storm, he let the atmosphere of the house do the usual work. Unlike Monmouth Manufacturing, 300 Fox Way was crowded with alien people and whimsy objects. It hummed with conversation, music, phones, old appliances. It was impossible to forget that these women were all plugged into the past and connected to the future, connected to everything in the world and to each other. Gansey didn't visit him as much as he did to immerse himself in it. Adored. He wanted to be a part of this world, even though he understood that there was an infinite reason why he could never be. Blue was the natural result of such a home: confident, strange, gullible, curious. And here it was: neurotic, squawking, a product of something completely different. Else? Calla asked. I can show you how to hang my jaw, if you will, Mr. Gray said kindly. Oh, yes, that - well, there's Richard Gansey in the third, Calla said, catching a sight on him. And the snake. Where's Coca-Cola? Work, Gansey said. He couldn't land. Persephone waved vaguely from behind a tall, light pink drink. The blue one didn't wave. He saw gansey's expression. Does the name Colin Greenmantle mean anything to you? Gansey asked Mr. Gray, though he already knew the answer. Page 10, handing Calla her drink, the Grey Man wiped his palms on his pants. Excellent teeth are gone. Colin Greenmantle was my employer. He's our new Latin teacher. Oh, my God, said Persi. Would you like a drink? Gansey found out you were talking to him. Oh, no, thank you. I need another one, he said. I'll make you one, too, Mr. Gray. The Grey Man went through the window. His car, a fine white Mitsubishi with a huge spoiler, was parked outside and both he and Ronan studied it pondering. After a very long moment, the Grey Man said, He's the man who asked me to kill Ronan's father. Gansey knew he couldn't be hurt by the casualness of the statement - Mr. Gray was the assassin, Niall Lynch was a sign he didn't know Ronan then, and ethically Mr. Gray's profession was probably no worse than a professional mercenary - but it didn't change that Ronan's father died. He reminded himself that the Grey Man was just the un caring weapon. Greenmantle was the hand that turned it. Ronan, who's been silent all this time, said, I'm going to kill him. Gansey suddenly had a terrible vision: Ronan's hand painted with blood, his eyes empty and comprehensible, a corpse at his feet. It was a wild and unspeakable image, which got worse because Gansey saw enough of the pieces separately to know exactly how they appear together. The Grey Man quickly turned around. He won't, said he, with the same force as Gansey had ever heard of him. Can you hear me? No, I can't. Oh, you can't? Ronan asked. His voice was quiet and dangerous; He's infinitely more threatening than if he'd snarled at his answer. Colin Greenmantle is untouchable, the Grey Man said. He spread his fingers wide, his hands hanging in the air. He was a spider clinging to the net. Every foot touches a thread, and if anything happens to the spider, hell falls. Ronan said, I've been through hell. You have no idea what hell is, said the Grey Man, but it's not unfriendly. You think you're the first son to want revenge? Do you think your father was the first person you killed? And yet Greenmantle is alive and untouched. Because we all know how it works. Before he came here from Boston, he would have attached 16 small threads. Like me, computer programs, bank accounts. The spider dies, the web twitches, suddenly the accounts are deleted, his younger brother gets amputated, his brother dies behind the wheel of a car in D.C., Mrs. Gansey's campaign immunees over fake scandalous photos, Adam's scholarship disappears, Blue loses an eye - Stop, Gansey said. He thought he might throw up. Jesus, please stop. I just want Ronan to understand that he can't do anything stupid, he told The Grey Man. If you kill Greenmantle, it will end your lives as you know it. And what good will revenge do? Says the killer, Ronan said. Now his snark is back, which meant he was hurt. Says the killer, yes, but I'm good at it. Mr. Gray replied. Even if there wasn't a spider in a dazzling web, would you be willing to go to jail for killing him? Without saying a word, Ronan walked through the front door, slammed it. Gansey didn't follow me. Torn from the urge to relieve Ronan's pain and the one that let it hurt, but he's careful. Violence was a disease Gansey didn't think he could catch. But around him, his friends slowly became infected. Persephone brought the Grey Man a drink; He had another one of his own. They were knocked back. Is that what you want? Blue asked Gansey. He tipped the yogurt container for her to see that the fruit was all that was left at the bottom. He didn't nod, but he brought it to her and gave her the spoon. It had a grounding effect - the shocking sludge of blueberries, the sugar hitting his stomach, empty from school, the knowledge that his mouth was the last thing to touch the spoon. Blue watched him bite the first bite, and quickly turned to Mr. Gray. He was the one who read it to you last night, wasn't he? Yes, Mr. Gray said. Just like I thought. And now he's teaching the boys Latin. Why? Gansey asked. Why us? Not you, replied Mr. Gray. I. He obviously didn't believe my story that I was running with Greywaren. He came to this house to look for Maura because he thought she was important to me. He infiltrated the school because he found out that you and I knew each other. He wants me to know that he knows I'm still here, and he wants me to know how much he knows about my life here. What do we do? Gansey asked. He began to feel that this day was a mistake; it was not the first day of school; He was supposed to stay in bed until tomorrow and try again. He's not your problem; He's mine, Mr. Gray said. He's at my school every day. Ronan has to look at his face every day. Why isn't that my problem? Mr. Gray said, Because he doesn't want you. I'll take care of it. Your problem is letting me deal with it. Gansey sank in a squat. He Mr. Gray intended to, but not in the statement. If you've learned anything in the last year, it's that everything in this town is messed up. Calla took Mr. Gray's wrist and slowly pretended to break his arm. Shaking her head a little, she swapped with him, taking his palm in one hand and his wrist in the other. He turned it over with slow precision. A few times to see how he does it. There was something satisfying about the way he savantly demonstrated this pretend violence, something controlled and beautiful. like a dance. Everything about the clean, muscular look and clean, deliberate process said we got the control. Where he stood for everything. Gansey wanted Greenmantle to be the Grey Man's problem. But again he saw the narrowing black tunnel and the pit, and at the bottom, a grave. Calla cursed him and took his shoulder. I'm sorry, Mr. Gray, told me. To Gansey; I'll find out what he wants. Don't die, Blue said immediately. I have no intention of doing so. Persephone finally spoke out in his tiny voice. I think it's a good thing you almost found that king. Gansey found out you were talking to him. Is it me? I'm sure, Calla said. It took a long time. 12 That night, shortly after returning from work, Adam heard a knock on the door of his temple dwelling. When he responded, he was first surprised that the person on the other side was real, and then surprised that person was Gansey, not Ronan. Oh, he said. It's late. Know. Gansey was in his coat and wireframe; obviously tried to sleep but failed. I'm sorry, I didn't know this was going to happen. Have you done your calculations yet? I can't get the four. He didn't say greenmantle. There was nothing to say until they heard more about Mr. Gray. Yes, but look at it. Adam let Gansey in and swept the letter—the letter—behind the small shelf next to the door, just like he did. Unlike Ronan, Gansey was out of place in the apartment. The ceiling transported made it even more difficult; the cracks in the plaster are engraved even more sharply. The utility-minded plastic crates containing Adam's things seemed even more deprived of aesthetic charm. Gansey belonged to the old stuff, but this place wasn't just old, it was cheap. The letter was hidden, wasn't it? That's what was. Adam felt his outline shine from behind the shelf. Gansey would pity him and hire a lawyer, and Adam feels like dirt, and then they're going to fight - we're not going to fight. Gansey threw off his coat - underneath it was a T-shirt and pajamas, which was perhaps the most metaphorical dress Adam could imagine for his friend unless he could wear another coat under the T-shirt, and another pajama under the second jacket, so on and on, ganseys endless matryoshka - and at the end of the bed. Mom called, Gansey said. Do I want to see the governor next weekend because it would be nice if I did and wanted to bring my friends? No, Mom, I wouldn't like that. Helen's going to be there. Yes, Mom, I assumed so, but I hardly think it's a positive, because I'm worried he's going to kidnap Adam. All right, all right, no, I know you're busy, but oh, dot dot dot et cetera, et cetera. Oh, I forgot, I brought a salary for my intrusion. He pulled his coat closer by his arm and took two chocolate bars out of his pocket. He threw one in Adam's lap, and the other one he skins for himself. Adam really wanted to eat it, but he put it aside to keep eating during public holidays tomorrow night. This will help you hold him up. He liked the idea that Gansey's elegant sister found him handsome. Because of its impossibility, it's just a pleasant ego stroke. Turn? I don't know, I don't know. If I do, will you come? Adam felt an instinctive envelopment. Muscle memory from the last political event in Gansey. I'd better invite Blue. He put me out of my way for not being invited to the last one. Gansey blinked, his eyes frightened behind his glasses. Because I didn't invite him? No, I did. But he's going to want to leave. Trust me. It was something scary. I believe you. Jesus, I pictured him meeting the governor. There's a slide show about his questions playing in my head. Adam grinned. He deserves them all. Gansey ran a pencil through his homework and aligned it with Adam's, although Adam saw that he had done the fourth properly before he arrived. Adam saw the chocolate and rubbed his hands. Every winter, they flew arselessly despite all their efforts, and they were already starting to dry. He realized that the knock had stopped, and when he looked up, he saw Gansey wrinkle it into space. Everyone says just find Glendower, Gansey said suddenly, but around me the cave walls are crumbling. It wasn't the walls of the cave that collapsed. Now that Adam had heard Gansey's anxiety in the cave, he was very at the tune of showing up again. He looked away to give Gansey a chance to get his act together, and then asked: What does Malory say to do next? I seem to be enthusiastic about Giant's Grave, and I can decipher it for no reason. Gansey did indeed take away the moment when Adam gave it to him to carefully give him his tone: anxiety transubstantiated by wry eprecation is a much-practiced ritual. He's talking about visual signals and energy readings, and how they all show there. He says how much he loves our ley line. He's all stary-eyed on it. You used to be, Adam reminded him. They both were. How ungrateful they have become, how greedy they are for better miracles. Gansey touched his pencil without a word. In this Adam heard a whisper from the direction of the bathroom. He knew from experience that they came from water dripping from the tap and that the tongue was gibberish to him. Ronan may have been able to identify a word or two; He had the puzzle box that translated the old language. But Adam was still silent, waiting to hear if the sounds were rising or ebbing, waiting to hear if the Ley line was healing or if Cableswater was trying to communicate. He found out Gansey looked at him, frowning. Adam wasn't sure what his expression was or how long he focused on something Gansey didn't hear. Gansey's face for a while. Malory's been stuck in Monmouth all day? Adam asked quickly. Gansey's face is clear. I gave him the Suburban to show me around. God help us; He drives like he's going out. But I can see you don't like Monmouth. Treason, said Adam, for he knew that gansey would please him, and he saw that it was so. Where's Ronan? Barns, he said. Do you believe him? Probably. He took his chainsaw, Gansey said. I don't think he's going to mess with Greenmantle - Mr. Gray is very persuasive. And what else would it cost? Kavinsky's dead, so- Jesus Christ, listen to me. Jesus Christ. The walls of the cave fell even more; before the ceremony was imperfect. Gansey leaned back against the wall and closed his eyes. Adam watched him swallow. He heard Gansey's voice in the cave again. It's okay, Adam said. He didn't care that Joseph Kavinsky was dead, but he liked Gansey. I know what you mean. No, it's not. It's disgusting of me. Gansey didn't open his eyes. It all got so ugly. It wasn't supposed to be like this. Everything got ugly for Adam, but he knew what Gansey meant. His noble, forgetful and optimistic friend slowly opened his eyes and saw the world for what it was, filthy, violent, profane and unjust. Adam always thought that's what he wanted - gansey needs to know. But now he wasn't sure. Gansey wasn't like everyone else, and all of a sudden Adam wasn't sure he really wanted her to be. Here, Adam said, standing, brought the history text. Read it. Loud. I'm taking notes. An hour passed so, Gansey read aloud his lovely old voice, and Adam jotting in his overambitious hands, and when Gansey reached the end of the task, he closed the text carefully and set the upside-down plastic bin Adam used for a bedside table. On page 11, Gansey stood up and put on his jacket. I think, he said, that if - if - we find Glendower, I'm going to ask him for Noah's life. Do you think that would work? It's such a non-sequitur of the previous conversation topic that Adam did not immediately respond to. He just looked at her. Something about him has changed; He changed while Adam turned his back. The wrinkle between your eyebrows? The way he got caught with his jaw? The tighter look in his mouth, perhaps, as responsibility yanked the corners down. Adam couldn't remember how they managed to fight so consistently this summer. Gansey, his best friend, his stupid, kind and wonderful best friend. He replied, No, but I think it's worth asking. Gansey nodded, once. Twice. I'm sorry I kept you up late. I'll see you tomorrow? The first thing. After Gansey left, Adam brought the hidden letter. It included his father's res scheduled trial. A distant part of Adam marveled that the sheer sight of Robert Parrish could twist his stomach in a muddy, homesick way. Eyes forward, Adam. He'll be behind you soon. Soon this school year will be behind him. They'll find Glendower soon, soon they'll all be kings. Soon, soon. 13 The next day after school, Blue sat at the table with a spoon in one hand, and Lysistrata, in the game he decided to analyze the Englishman, the other. (It's not easy, you know, for women to run away. One is busy with her husband; he awakens the servant; to put your child to sleep or to wash or feed the cub.) Gray drizzle squeezing the windows of the crowded kitchen. Blue didn't mean Lysistrat. He meant Gansey and the Grey Man, Maura and the Ravens' Den. Suddenly, a shadow, the exact size and shape of his cousin Orla, fell over the table. I understand that Maura is away, but that's no reason to go around that social tar. Orla said by way of hello. And when was the last time you ate food that didn't contain yogurt? Sometimes Blue couldn't take Orla. It was one of those times. He didn't look up. Don't be offensive. Charity said that T.J. asked me out today, and you just stared at him. What's going on? T.J. asked me out. You were just staring at him. Are they ringing? Orla graduated from Mountain View High a long time ago, but they were still friends or ex-girlfriends with her entire class, and the collective power of younger siblings served to give Orla a slightly incomplete, view of Blue's current high school life. Blue looked up (and up and up) at her tall cousin. At lunch, T.J. came up to my desk and drew a penis on the unicorn on my binder. Is this the case charity's referring to? Not Richard Gansey is third to me, Orla replied. Because if that's what you mean, yes, I was just staring at him. I didn't know it was a conversation because it's his penis. Orla was magnificently widened in her nostrils. Here's some advice: Sometimes people just try to be friendly. You can't expect everyone to always be deep. We're just talking. I chat, Blue hit back. T.J. incident didn't offend him, although he would have preferred his unicorn, not sex. It just felt tired older than everyone at school. Do you mind? I'm trying to take care of it before Gansey gets here. (O Zeus, what a pulsating suffering!) You know, you can only be friends with people, said Orla. I think it's crazy that you're in love with raven boys. Orla, of course, wasn't wrong. But what he didn't realize about Blue and his sons was that they were all in love. He is no less obsessed with them than they were with him or another, analyzing every conversation and gesture, drawing out every joke in a longer and longer running gag, spending every moment either with each other or thinking when the next would be with each other. Blue was perfectly aware that it was possible to have a friendship that wasn't all encompassing, that it wasn't blinding, deafening, maddening, accelerator. It's just that now that he had that kind, he didn't want the other one. Orla snapped her fingers between Blue and her book. Blue. That's what I'm talking about. Blue folded his finger on the sides to hold his seat. I didn't ask for advice. No, but I should, Orla said. What do you think's going to happen in a year? All your people are going to go to fancy school, and where are you going to be? Here in Henrietta with the people you didn't talk to. Blue opened his mouth and closed it, and Orla's eyes flashed to victory. He knew he dug me down into the bone marrow. Outside, the acquaintance grumbles about an old Camaro sounded blue and jumped up. He threw the spoon in the sink. Here's my ride. It's a temporary trip. The blue one exploded and threw his yogurt can in the recycling bin. What is it, Orla? Jealousy? Or what? You just don't want me to like them as well as I do because... Are you trying to save me from getting hurt? You know what's temporary? Life. Oh, please, you don't think you're going to take this away a little bit, so maybe I should have spread my love through other mothers! Blue picked up his coat and ran down the hall towards the door. If I didn't love him so much, it wouldn't feel so bad if he left. I might have some spare parents, each with a little bit of my affection, that when one of them disappears, I barely notice! Or maybe I shouldn't love anyone or anything! That's what makes it easiest, really, because then I'll never let you down. I'm building a tower for my heart! Oh, relax your ass off, Orla said, clomping after Blue on his platform cloggings. That's not what I meant. You know what I think, Orla? I think you're a big, fat bully - Blue barreled right into Gansey, who entered the front hallway. It stank for a second, he felt the strength of his chest, and then he rolled back. Gansey untangled his watch from Blue's crochet jacket. Hey, I'm sorry. Oh, Orla. 'Oh, Orla,' replied Orla, not very pleasantly. He didn't have it, but he didn't know it; he backed down. From upstairs, Calla screamed. Shut up! Later, you'll remember this conversation and apologize to me, Orla told Blue. You forget who you are. She spind as much grace as she could handle her long legs and glue shoes. Gansey was too gracious to inquire about the source of the dispute late. Get me out of here,' Blue said. Besides, it was an unfortunate day, wet and cool, late autumn came too early. Malory was already installed in the front seat of the Pig; Blue felt sorry for him at the same time, and he was glad he was here. It would have stopped him from doing something stupid. Now he was sitting next to the dog, looking out of the back seat window as they passed Mount Mole on the way to Mount Coopers and fell in a bad mood towards grey. It was a completely different part of the world than Henrietta. It's rural, but less wild. More cows, less forest. And very poor. The houses that lined the highway were smaller than single-width trailers. I'm not hopeful about this, Gansey said also. Malory. He tore his left shoulder; Rain came in through the window, though it was re-released. The water also drips on the instrument under the rearview mirror. Malory blew the water off the map in his hand. I've been climbing this mountain for a year, and I haven't seen a cave. If there is, it's someone else's secret. Blue leaned forward; So is the Dog. He said: There's this super smart way for people in the country to learn someone else's secrets. We'll ask them. Gansey met his eyes, then the dog's, in the rearview mirror. Adam keeps his secrets pretty close. Oh, not Adam's country people. Blue discovered that there were two different stereotypes about the rural population in his part of Virginia: neighbors who lent each other cups of sugar and knew everything about everyone, and peasants who stood on the porch with shotguns and shouted racist things when they got drunk. Because he was so thoroughly integrated into the first group, he didn't believe in the second group until he was in his teens. The school taught him that the two breeds were almost never born in the same alomba. Look, he said. When we get there, I'll show you the houses where you can stop. Coopers Mountain turned out to be more of a mountain than a proper mountain, impressive mostly because of its sudden appearance in sparsely populated areas. There was a small neighborhood lying on one side. The rest of the area was widely tossed by farmhouses. Blue directed Gansey past the former and towards the latter. People in the area only know about the people in the area. Said. There are no caves in the area. Here, here, that's good. You'd better wait in the car with your fancy face. Gansey was too aware of his face to protest. He minced the Camaro on a long gravel road that ended in a white farmhouse. The shaggy dog is not breed, or all breeds burst out to bark at him as he climbed out into the rain. Hey, you, Blue greeted him, and the dog retreated immediately on the porch. At the door, an older woman holding a magazine responded to her knock. He seemed friendly. In Blue's experience, everyone who lived in remote tired farmhouses generally seemed friendly until they didn't. What can I do for you? Blue slathered her accent as slow and local as possible. I'm not going to sell anything, I promise. My name is Blue Sargent and I live in Henrietta, and I'm doing a geological project. I heard there's a cave around here. Can you show me the right way? Then he smiled, as if she had already helped him. If there was one thing Blue learned while she was a waitress and a dog walker and Maura Sargent's daughter, it was that people usually became the people you expected. She considered it. Well, that sounds familiar, but I don't think... Did you ask Wayne? Bauer? He's good at this area. Which one is it now? She introduced me across the highway. Blue gave him an upright thumb. She wished me luck. Turns out Wayne Bauer wasn't home, but his wife didn't know anything about the cave, but if they'd asked Jimmy on the road because he was always digging trenches, and you knew you'd found all sorts of things in the trenches. And Jimmy didn't know, but he thought Gloria Mitchell said something about it last year. They found out Gloria wasn't home, but her old sister, and she said, What, you mean Jesse Dittley's cave? You don't have to look so smug, Gansey told Blue as she bucked her seat belt. Of course there is, Blue replied. The Dittley farm was right at the base of Mount Coopers. The submersed half-timbered house was surrounded by partial cars and whole stéks, all overgrown. The abandoned tires and broken window air conditioners inspired the same feeling of blue as the crowded kitchen-bathroom-laundry in Monmouth did: the urge to tidy up and give space to order. As he climbed out, he turned the name Jesse Dittley over and over again. Something was poking his mind, but he didn't know what to think. Old family friend? Sex offender from a newspaper article? Character from a picture book? In case he's in the middle, I'm sure he's got his pink pen knife in his pocket. He didn't think he'd have to stab anyone, but he liked to be prepared. He was standing on the slanted porch with fourteen empty milk jugs. ten cats and knocked. It took a long time for the door to open, and when that happened, a cigarette smoke thud came out of it. WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU? He looked up at the man. He looked down at her. She could have been nearly seven feet tall and wore the biggest white wife-beater that she'd ever seen (and she's seen a lot). His face was mild, if surprised; In the thunderous, Blue decided he had the chest capacity and not the malice. He stared at his shirt, which he made out of ribbons and soft drink corks, and then on to his face. I'm excited to meet you, that's who I am. He looked past her in the house. He saw more reclining armchairs than he'd ever seen in his life (and he's seen a lot). There was no indication of where he heard his name. Are you Jesse Dittley? Jesse Dittley. YOU NEVER AEED THE VEGETABLES? It's true that Blue is only shy of five feet, and it's also true that he hasn't eaten the greens, but he's done his research and he doesn't think the two are related. He said, I lost the genetic pitch of the cube. IT'S BLOODY STRAIGHT. I'm here because people say you have a cave. He took that into account. He scratched his chest. Finally, it looked to see where the Camaro was sitting sodden in the pitted driveway. Who is it? My friends, replied Blue, who are also interested in the cave. If it exists. OH, IT EXISTS. He let out a hurricane-sized sigh. WE MIGHT AS WELL TELL THEM TO COME OUT OF THE RAIN. The Camaro is theoretically already out of the rain - well, maybe not Gansey's left shoulder - but Blue didn't argue the point. He made a gesture to get the others to join him. Page 12 Inside the farmhouse, it was like the outside. Machines half-dissected, dead plants in dry pots, dusty bedspreads balled in the corners, cats staring from inside the sink. It was gray, colorless and dark in the rain. There was something laterally about it as the corridors were a little too narrow or a little slanted or just slightly wrong in some way. Jesse Dittley. His familiarity drove him crazy. In the living room, Malory sat on a brown armchair without blinking an eye. Gansey stayed standing. He seemed a little weak. Blue sat without an Ottoman chair. Jesse Dittley stood next to a card table covered in empty glasses. He didn't offer them drinks. WHAT DO YOU WANT TO KNOW ABOUT THE CAVE? Before they could answer, he added grimly: 'He's cursed. It's my fault, said Malory. I'm not so interested in curses, Gansey said, with old money Virginia accents sounding elegant and concerned alongside Jesse. Is he nearby? There it is, Jesse reported. Oh, that's it! Do you know how long it is? Gansey, however, asked Blue, friendlyly. What curse? MY FATHER DIED IN IT. And my father's father. AND MY Dad's dad. Jesse concluded, possibly erroneously, it's probably not over. SO YOU'RE ONE OF THE AGLONBY BOYS? Yes, Gansey replied exactly, THAT'S DOG WANTS WATER? They were all looking at the dog. The dog looked a little weak. Oh, if it's not too much trouble, Malory said. Jesse went to get water. Gansey checked me out with Blue. That unexpectedly became ominous. Do you think there's a curse? He asked. Of course there is, Malory replied. It's a ley line. Revelations and lightning, black beasts and time is slipping. For us, just the Ley line. For everyone else, a curse, Gansey finished in amazement. Of course you don't. Jesse came back with a cinged glass mixing bowl full of water. The dog drank voraciously. The Camaro had an exhaust leak that had a dehydrating effect on the occupants. WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM THE CAVE? I think there's a lot of caves here without curses. Gansey replied: We are discovering another cave system and have reached a sealed section. We're trying to find another way, and we think your cave might do it. How nicely the truth worked. Jesse took them out the back door, through another porch into the fog. It was even bigger out there than Blue thought. Or maybe, now it was easier to compare the size of the house and find the house they wanted. As he led them through a giant cow pasture, his head didn't jump into the rain. This lack of concern struck Blue as noble, though he could not quite convince his own head to follow the lead as the rain dripping off her earlobes. This weather reminds me of this terrible climb I went with this guy Pelham, Malory muttered, producing an umbrella for his person and sharing it with Blue. Fourteen kilometers in each direction, and all for a standing stone that looked like a dog in certain lights. The man was talking about football and his girlfriend - it was a terrible time for everyone. With big, sloping strides, Jesse led them to a barbed wire fence. On the other side, a ruined stone structure of unspecified age grew out of the rocky hillside. It was roofless and about twenty feet square. Although it was just a collapsed story, something about it gave the impression of height, as if it were once higher. Blue struggled to imagine what his original purpose might have been. Something about the tiny aspect of the windows seemed wrong for a residence. If it wasn't Virginia, if it had been in an older place, he would have thought it was the ruin of a stone tower. THAT'S IT, THAT'S IT. Blue and Gansey checked it out. Gansey's look said he told him it was a cave, right? Blue said we definitely did. Jesse used a stick to push down the top string of barbed wire so they could cross - except for the Dog, who brazenly behind. Then, feet slip on the wet leaves, climbing the mountain. On the back of the building was a much newer door in the old door frame. A padlock kept it locked. Jesse pulled out a key he gave Blue. I? He asked. I'm not going in there. Gallant, Blue noted. He wasn't exactly nervous; It was just that he didn't leave that morning with the intention of rescuing a curse. Just kills DITTLEYS. Jesse calmed him down. Unless you have dittley blood in you? Blue said, I don't think so. He put the key in the lock and let the door open. Inside there were tree children, collapsed stones, and then a hole in the rubble. It wasn't like the inviting cave opening cabswater took care of for them. It was smaller, blacker, more uneven, steeper from the start. It looked like a place of secrets. Look at that cave, Gansey, Malory said. I wonder who said there was a cave here. Leave the complacency to Jane, Gansey said. Don't come here, Blue warned him, picking his way through the rubble. In case there are nests or something. It looks bad when you look in,' Jesse said as he looked into the hole. It was all black on the inside, in black, because there was no sun. But it's not steep. It's just cursed. How do you know it's not steep? He asked. I'VE BEEN IN IT FOR MY FATHER'S BONES. The curse won't take you until it's ready. It was hard to argue with that logic. Can we go in there? Gansey asked. I'm not coming back now, I'm coming back with the right equipment? Jesse looked at him, then Malory, and finally Blue. I like the look of it, so - It shook his head. I'm sorry, did you say no? Gansey asked. He didn't have a clear conscience. COME ON, GET OUT OF THERE. Let's go! Gansey hit him up. He accepted the key from Blue's shocked fingers. Oh, but we would be very careful, he told her. Jesse locked the door again like he wasn't talking. Can we pay for his expenses? Gansey suggested it carefully, and Blue kicked his leg hard enough to leave a muddy scuff on his pants. Jesus, Janet! Don't take the Lord's name in vain, said Jesse. You kids have a good time when you're discovered somewhere else. OH, YES! THE SHORT ROAD IS ACROSS THE FIELD. I've got a good one. They were dismissed. There's no way they've been dismissed. Just like that, Malory said, as she headed back across the wet area, shoulders hunked miserably. Caves are terrible places to die. What's going to happen now? Blue asked. Looks like we're going to have to hurry. Hurry up, hurry. Gansey said. So we're going to find a way to convince him, I guess. Or we're trespassing. After getting into the car, he realized he was wearing his Aglonby uniform, his shoulders splashed together. So was his soul when he saw it on the Ley line. He could have died in that field and been buried. But he didn't think about it after that. It was so impossible to live backwards. 14 It says: grass-fed organic cheddar from New Zealand, said Greenmantle, closing the door behind him. The empty room immediately darkened without the evening light from the outside. Squeezing his luggage to his face to see the label and speaking loudly to be heard through the house, he continued: A slight cheddar cheese, fed with grass, made from fresh organic milk on a farm. Ingredients: cow's milk, salt, beginner cultures - so like Dave Brubeck, Warhol, that sort of thing - coagulating enzyme, oh, it's the mainstream media. He dropped his coat on the chair at the front door, and after a moment of consideration, his pants. Piper's desire was like a bear trap in the wild. It was almost impossible to find him if you were looking for him, but it was something you wanted to be prepared for if you accidentally step in. I hope silence means you're going to get the biscuits out. Greenmantle entered the kitchen. Cracker-fetching wasn't the reason For Piper's silence. He stood in the dining room with a pee look on his face and pink yoga pants on his feet and a gun pointed at his head. Greenmantle's former employee, the Grey Man, was his gun. He and Piper both got silhouettes through the window, which looked at the cow pasture. The Grey Man looked good, healthy, tanned, as if Henrietta and the rebellion were right for him. Piper seemed angry, not at the Grey Man, but at Greenmantle. It took the Grey Man longer to show up than Greenmantle expected. Well, at least he was here now. I think I'll just biscuit myself, then, Greenmantle said, dropping the block of cheese on the middle island. I'm sorry I'm not dressed as company. Don't move, said the Grey Man, cocking his jaw toward the gun in his hand. He was black and shocking-looking, although Greenmantle had no idea what he was like. The silveries seemed less dangerous to him, though he thought it was a mistake that could get him into trouble. Don't move. Oh, stop, Greenmantle said exasperatedly, turning to the chopping board from the counter. You're not going to shoot Piper. Are you sure? Yes, I think so. Greenmantle brought out the biscuits, a plate and a knife from the knife block and assembled them in a reasonable manner. He closed one eye and held up a piece of cheese. Do you think this is the right size? Cut it thinner? These are the biscuits we have to go into. This piece is the same as a whole egg, Piper said. I'm sorry, this knife isn't very sharp. Mr. Gray. The gun? Don't you think that's a little theatrical? The Grey Man wouldn't let the gun down. It still looks dangerous, and so does the Grey Man. He was very good at looking scary, but his job description was to be the scariest thing in the room at any given time. Mr. Gray asked: Why are you here? And the dance started. Why am I here? Greenmantle told me. I'm more disturbed why you're here, because you specifically said you stole my things and ran away to West Palm Springs. What a day it was for Laumonier to see Laumonier and the cursed Peruvian textiles getting stopped at customs before he ever saw them, and then the Grey Man shits on the bed. I told you the truth first. And that wasn't good enough. Greenmantle slaughtered a piece of cheese. Oh, yes, the... Truth... Which one was it again? Naturally. The truth was when he said that the artifact, which is said to have been in this area for more than a decade and can actually be traced back quite convincingly to that loser, Niall Lynch, didn't exist. If I remember correctly, I rejected that truth. I'm trying to remember why I would do that. Do you remember, honey, why I decided it was a lie? Piper's talisman is going to get a talisman. Because you're not a total idiot? Greenmantle shook the knife to his wife. Spouse. Partner. Loving. Yes, it was. Now I remember. The Grey Man said, I told you it wasn't a relic, and I'm sticking with it. It's a phenomenon, not a thing. Don't lie to me, Mr. Gray. Greenmantle said pleasantly. He put cheese biscuits in his mouth and talked him around. How do you think I knew his name? Niall Lynch told me. He's fucking pretentious. He thought he was invincible. Can I pour some wine? There's this offensive red I brought with me. It's a nice thing. The Grey Man took a cool look at him. The assassin looks like him. Greenmantle has always loved the idea of being a mysterious assassin, but this career goal is always paled compared to the enjoyment of going out into town, and having people admire his reputation and driving the Audi to the individual plate (GRNMNTL) and going on cheese holidays in countries that put their little hats over vowel sounds like this: è. What do you want from me? Mr. Gray asked. Greenmantle replied: If we had a time machine, I'd say you could pull yourself back and do what I first asked, but I think that ship sailed into the sea of clusterfuck. You want to open the wine? I always plug it in. Not! All right, then. I suppose you understand you have to set an example. He went through the kitchen and put a cheese cracker on Piper's tongue. He offered one to the Grey Man, who wouldn't accept it, and he wouldn't let the gun down. He continued: I mean, what would the others think if I let them Are you going to get away with this? It wouldn't be good. So, while I've enjoyed our time together, I think that means you're probably going to have to destroy me. Then shoot me, said the Grey Man without fear. He really was a work of art, the Grey Man. He's an assassin action figure. His nodule only proved what Greenmantle already knew: There are things in this city that the Grey Man thought were more important than his own life. Oh, Mr. Gray. Dean. You know better. No one remembers a body. I know you're aware of how this works. Greenmantle cut another piece of cheese. First of all, I'm going to hang out here, just observe. Considering the view. Figuring out the best breakfast places, seeing the tourist attractions, watching you sleep, figuring out everything that's important to you, finding the woman you fell in love with, the best way to destroy the above publicly agonizing for you. Et cetera, and so on. Page 13: Give me another one, but not so much cheese, Piper said. That's what he did. The Grey Man said, If you want to ruin my life anyway, I have no motivation to kill you and Piper right now. Talk dirty to me, Greenmantle said. It's like the old days. There's another option, Mr. Gray. You can give me Greywaren, like I asked, and then we'll film a short video of you pulling off your trigger finger, and then it's over for today. He raised his hand like Lady Justice, with the cheese in one hand and the knife in the other. Or/or. What if there's no Greywaren? Greenmantle said. You are always there for the public destruction of everything you love. Opportunities: the American dream. The Grey Man seemed to be considering it. Usually everyone else seemed terrified of this point, but it's possible the Grey Man had no emotions. I need to think about it. Sure, Greenmantle told me. Should I give you a week? No, nine days. Nine is very three and three and three. I'm just going to look around while you decide. Thank you for stopping by. The Grey Man backed away from Piper, pointed a gun at her, and then disappeared through the door behind her. The room was quiet. Isn't this a closet? Greenmantle asked. This door to the garage, you piece of crap, Piper said with characteristic affection. Now that I've missed out on the edg, what am I supposed to tell them? I had a gun pointed at my head. And I told you to throw those boxers out months ago. The band is stretched out. That was me, he said. I stretched it out. I understand? Piper's voice remained like the rest of the left. I'm sick of your hobbies. This is the worst vacation I've ever been on. 15 Adam was alone in the store. On the still rainy evening, it was prematurely dark inside, in the corners garage consumed in the gloom that the fluorescent over it could not reach. He spent countless hours there, so his hands knew where to find things, even if his eyes didn't. Now it's been stretched over the engine of an old Pontiac, the dirty radio on store shelves to keep it company. Boyd set out to change the seal and close the store. The dinner, he said, was for old men like him. It wasn't hard work, which in a way was worse because his free mind was really real. Even when he mentally went through the details of the big events of 1920s United States history in a quiz, there was much leftover brainpower to consider, whether his back hurt by leaning over the engine, the fat felt in his ears, the frustration of this rusty head sledge, the proximity of this court date, and the presence of others here on the Ley line. He wondered if Gansey and the others had actually gone out into the rain to explore Mount Coopers. Part of him hoped not to, although he did his best to kill the baser's emotions regarding his friends - if he let it run wild, he'd be jealous of Ronan, jealous of Blue, jealous of Gansey or the other two. Any combination that didn't have Adam in it would cause some inconvenience if you let it. He wouldn't let me. Don't fight with Gansey. Don't fight Blue. Don't fight with Gansey. Don't fight Blue. There was no point in telling you not to fight Ronan. They fought again because Ronan was still breathing. The wind blew in front of the store, and the rain splashed towards the small striped windows of the garage doors. Dry leaves rattled against the wall and snked. This was the time of year when it could be hot or cold day by day; It wasn't summer or spring. An intermediate, liminal time. It's a boundary. As he

moved to better reach the engine block, he felt a cool breeze around his ankles and was playing inside the cuffs of his pants. His hand hurt; They're still potted. When he was a kid, he licked their backs, and at first he didn't realize they were still capped in the long run. It was hard to break. Even now, as they pinched, he resisted the urge to relieve discomfort for a moment. Outside, the wind blew again, with several leaves rattling the windows. Inside, something shifted and clicked. Something that settles in the trash can, maybe. Adam rubbed his arm against his face, and he only found out when he did that he had smears on his arm. It didn't make sense to wipe his face until he was done with the night. There was another click from the store. He stopped at work, a wrench hovered over the engine, and the top of the skull touched him over the open hood. It seemed like something else, but he Figure out what it was. The radio didn't play anymore. Adam watched the old radio carefully. He just saw two bays on the other side of Pontiac, a pickup truck and a small Toyota. The power light was off; Maybe he finally died. But still, Adam asked about the empty garage, Noah? It wasn't like Noah to be deliberately scary, but Noah's been less Noah lately than usual. Less Noah and more dead. Something popped out. It took Adam a second to realize that it was a portable work light that was hanging from the edge of the hood. It's blacked out. Noah? Is that you? Adam suddenly had the terrible and threatening feeling that something was behind him, watching him behind him. Something close enough to blow cold around his ankles again. Something big enough to exclude a little light from the bulb at the side door. It wasn't Noah. Outside, the thunder suddenly crashed. Adam's devastated. He climbed out from under the hood, spinning, and pushed her back to the car. There was nothing there but concrete blocks, calendars, tools on the walls, posters. But one of the wrenches was swinging on the tool wall. The other side of the garage was blurry, just like Adam couldn't remember. Go away, leave - Something touched the back of his head. He closed his eyes. Adam understood it at the same time. Cabeswater was the one who tried to understand you. Persephone has been working with him to improve his communications: Usually, he asked me every morning what he needed while he flipped tarot cards or scryed into the bathroom sink. But he hasn't asked since school started. So now he's forcing her to listen. Cabeswater, Persphone once said, quiet and strict, not your boss. Something clicked on the table on the opposite wall. Adam said, Wait! Dove into his messenger bag as the room went dark on. His fingers found his notebooks, his textbooks, his envelopes, his pens, the forgotten chocolate. Something else flipped over, closer. For a minute, he thought he left the tarot cards in the apartment. It won't hurt. It's going to be scary, but it's not going to hurt you – but fear hurts too. Just because he's tantrums, Of coursephone added, doesn't make it better than you. The cards. Squating by his bag, Adam snatched the velvet bag and put the deck in his hand. Persaton has been teaching him all sorts of meditation methods, but he wouldn't be meditating now. Trembling, he mingle with the deck as the oil began to roll over in the pan below Pontiac, an angry ocean. He hit three sheets on the concrete. Death, Empress, the devil. Think, Adam, think, get in it – The nearest fluorescent buzzed roughly, suddenly too bright, and then just as suddenly out. Adam's subconscious fled in Cabeswater's consciousness, both of them caught up in this strange deal he made. The Empress, the Devil. Three sleepers, yes, yes, he knew that, but they only needed one, and besides, what was Cabeswater interested in, who was sleeping on the Ley line, what did he need from Adam? His mind focused on a branched thought, traveling along a limb, to a trunk, down to the roots, into the ground. In that darkness, filth and rock, he saw the Ley line. Eventually he saw the connection and where it broke and understood what Cabeswater had asked him to fix. The relief washed it over. I get it, he said loudly, resenting, caught himself in the cold concrete. I'll do it this week. The store immediately returned to normal. The radio spoke to the game again; Adam didn't hear the moment it started again. While Cabeswater's communication tools can be terrifying - apparitions, black dogs, howling winds, faces of mirrors - the point was never to intimidate him. He knew that. But it was hard to remember it as the walls shifted and the water on the floor inside the windows and imaginary women sobbed in his ears. He always stopped as soon as Adam understood. He just wanted you to understand. He took a deep breath next to his tarot cards. It's time to get back to work. He heard something. It shouldn't have been anything anymore. But something scraped through the store door. It was a dry, thin noise, like a paper tear. It's a claw. It's a nail. But he understood. He promised to do the job. He was going to tell you it was just a leaf or a branch. Something casual. But Henrietta wasn't a normal place anymore. It wasn't ordinary anymore. I said I understood, Adam said. Understand. This week. Should it be sooner? There was no answer inside the garage, but outside, something light and restless moved away from one of the windows, high off the ground. There was just enough light to see his scales. Scales. Adam's pulse picked up, his heart beating so hard, it hurt. Cabeswater must have believed him; He's never let her down before. There were no rules, but there was trust. The noise came just outside the door: tck-tck-tck-tck. The garage door opened. It sounded like a freight train as it roared along the tracks on the ceiling. In the harsh evening, in the deep blue-and-black rain, a pale monster was raised. There were needle arms and wild beaks, ragged wings and greasy scales. He was so opposed to everything that was real that it was hard to even really see it. Terror was Adam's. The old terror, one that has just as much confusion and betrayal as fear itself. He did everything right. Why did it still happen if you did everything right? In horror an animal took a scratch, slipping step towards Adam. Shoo, you nasty bastard, said Ronan Lynch. He stepped out of the rain and went into the store; It was hidden in the dark in his jacket and dark jeans. Chainsaw clinging shoulder. Ronan raised his hand to the white monster, as if he had thrown himself off a boat. The creature pulled its head back, separated side by side. Come on, Ronan said, not afraid. Flew. For he was not just any monster; It was Ronan Lynch's monster. A night of horror that brought an evil life. He swam up into the dark, strangely gracefully, as soon as his face disappeared. Damn, Ronan, damn it, Adam gasped, his head was busted. Oh, my God, it's not my fault. You scared the out of me. Ronan grinned. He didn't understand that Adam's heart was going to explode. Adam wrapped his arm around the back of his head and curled into a ball on the concrete, waiting for him to feel like he wasn't going to die. He heard the garage door rattle closed again. Temperatures rose as soon as the wind was closed. A boot pushed Adam's knee. Get up. You donkey**down, Adam mumbled, still hasn't raised his head. Get up. He didn't mean to hurt you. I don't know why you're. Adam's curled up. Slowly, he was given enough functionality to be more annoyed than afraid. He pushed her to her feet. There's more to the world than you, Lynch. Ronan turned his head to the side to read the cards. What is this? Cabeswater, I'm sorry. What's f**k wrong with your face? Adam didn't answer that. Why was he with you? I was at the Barns. He followed the car. Ronan lurked around Pontiac, staring at the process with selflessness of understanding. Chainsaw hacked down to squat on the engine block, head busted. No, Ronan warned me. It's toxic. Adam wanted to ask what Ronan was doing at Barns all day and night, but he didn't push it. Barns was Ronan's family business, and the family was private. I saw the shitty box on the lot backwards, Ronan said. And I thought anything to avoid Malory for a few more minutes. Touching. What do you think of the idea of researching Greenmantle's cobwebs? Possible? Isn't that possible? Anything is possible. Then do it for me, Ronan said. Adam laughed in disbelief. Do it for you. Some of us have homework, you know. Homework! What's the point? Tickets fed? Graduation? Ronan was sworn in as an indication of further lack of interest. Are you just trying to me off? Adam asked. Ronan picked up an outlet from the work table on the other side of Pontiac. He studied it by suggesting that he considered it a weapon of merit. Aglionby is pointless for people like us. What do you think, people love us? I'm not going to use it, Ronan said, to do some work on a tie - He made a dangling movement over his neck, tilting his head. And you could find a way to make the Ley line work for you, as it has been her. Page 14 Adam responded: What do you see now, what am I doing? Where are we at all? Offensively close to the Toyota where I am. Work. I'll be at my next job in two hours for another four hours. If you're going to convince me that I don't need Aglionby after killing myself for a year because of him, you've only got your breath. Be a loser if you want, but don't make me a part of it, make you feel better. Ronan's expression was cool at the top of the Pontiac. Well, he said fuck it, Parrish. Adam just looked at her. Do your homework. Anyway, whatever. I'm going to get out of here. By the time Adam leaned in for a rag to get the fat out of his ear, the other boy was gone. It was as if he had taken with him all the noise of the garage; the wind was out, so the leaves no longer ran, and the radio tuning shifted, so the station was still a little blurry. He seemed safer, but he was also lonelier. Later, Adam walked out on the cool, damp night to his little shitty car. As he sank in the driver's seat, he found something that was already sitting in the seat. He recovered the object and held it up under the weak inner cab light. It was a small white plastic container. Adam unscrewed the lid. Inside was a colorless lotion that smelled of fog and moss. He replaced the lid with a wrinkled one, turned the container around and looked for additional identifying characteristics. At the bottom, Ronan's handwriting was just marked with the manibus. For your hand. 16 I mean, it's the nicest possible way, Malory said, tilting Gansey's desk chair, but it can't be tea for love or money. The night outside the windows was black and damp; Henrietta's lights seemed to move as the dark trees blew back and forth in front of them. Gansey sat on the floor next to his city model and worked slowly on it. I did not have time to add something new; instead, it took minutes here and there to repair the damage done in the summer. It was definitely less satisfying to restore something that was like growing. I don't know what I'm doing wrong, Gansey admitted. It seems like a simple process. If I wasn't afraid to be in the bathroom you call a kitchen, I'd advise you, Malory said. But I'm afraid one day I'm going to go into the room and never come out. Gansey recorded a tiny cardboard staircase with a glass of glue and looked up to find the dog watching him with narrow eyes. The dog was not mistaken; He put the stairs up a little skeely. Gansey straightened them out. Better? Asked. Never mind, Malory replied. He's very upset. He's confused, Gansey, that you didn't think about sending Glendower to sleep at 600. I've thought about it, Gansey said. Well, it's my fault. Guessing. I can't prove or deny theories. And while interesting, it's ultimately irrelevant. - I don't agree with a scientist's point of view, as you should. Oh, should I? Your own assumption is that Glendower traveled here via the Ley line. A perfectly straight line at sea is not an easy thing to achieve. He's going to have to make a lot of fuss to hide a prince. Why don't we hide it on a Welsh line? The English would not have rested until they had found him, said Gansey. Wales is too small for such a secret. Is that it? You and I were walking in Wales. Tell me there's no place in the mountains where I can hide it. Gansey couldn't. Malory ran to the pool table maps. As Gansey joined him, he followed his finger through the overflowing sea, from Wales to tiny Henrietta. Why would we take on the almost impossible task of sailing a perfectly straight line across the sea? Gansey didn't say anything. This map was unmarked, but couldn't help but see all the places it was. Outside, wind blew suddenly, plastering wet, dead leaves against the window panes. The Ley lines, the corpse paths, the death paths, Doodwegen, if you believe in the Netherlands, but who doesn't, that's how we used to carry on the dead, Malory said. The pallbearers traveled the burial paths to keep the souls intact. Choosing a crooked path was to replace the soul, and a spooky one, or worse. So when they were traveling in a straight line with Glendower, it was because they treated him like the dead. So he had been asleep when they left, Gansey said, though now sleeping seemed too easy a word for him. I had a flash of memory, although it was not real memory; It was a vision in Cabeswater. Glendower is touching in his coffin, his arms clinging to his chest, a sword with one hand and a glass on the other. Gansey, his hands floated on the helmet, feared and ecstatic to finally look into the face of the king after six hundred years. His soul was kept with his body. Exactly. And now that I'm here, now that I've seen your lines, I think they sailed all the way here because they were looking for this place. Malory ttted on the map. Virginia? Cabeswater, I'm sorry. The word hung in the room. If you don't have Cabeswater himself, you're in a place like this, Malory continued. Maybe they just followed the energy values until they found a place where there's enough power to keep a soul in stasis for hundreds of years. Or at least longer than your companions thought they'd live themselves. Gansey's been thinking about this. The psychics said there were three sleepers. Not just Glendower, but two others. I What you're saying would explain why there might be others here. Not necessarily because no one tried to put someone else to sleep elsewhere, but because they couldn't get anywhere but here. It inspired a shudder, an unpleasant thought, to imagine being sent out for a reliable, accidental death. The two of them stared at the map for a few minutes. Then Malory said, I'm going to bed. Are we doing a search tomorrow, or can I drive to that other Virginia again to look for more cartography? Other -? West. West Virginia. I think we're going to have to go with you after class. Excellent. Malory left the objectionable tea on the pool table and retired with the Dog. Gansey didn't move in the warehouse after the door closed. He stood for so long that he felt confused; It could have been standing for a minute, it could have been an hour ago. Maybe now, a year ago. He was as much a part of this room as his telescope and stacks of books. Unchanged. It cannot be modified. He couldn't decide if he was tired or tired of waiting. He was wondering where Ronan was going. He didn't call Blue. Look, I found this. Gansey jumped at the exact moment he recognized Noah's voice. The dead boy sat cross-legged at the end of Gansey's mattress in the middle of the room. Gansey was relieved to see that Noah looked more determined than the last time he saw him. In his hand, he held a dark grey piece of clay, which he turned into a small, negative-looking snowman. It's frosty, the clay man, said Noah, amusing. I took it from Ronan's room. Look, it's melting. Gansey looked more at him as he settled into the cross-eyed reflection of Noah. Did you get it from your sleep? Gas station, I think. There are metal flakes in the clay or something, said Noah. See, he's standing on that magnet. After a while, it grinds and eats the magnet. Observed. They've been watching a lot. He moved so slowly that it took Gansey a full minute to believe that the metallic putty would eventually absorb the magnet. Is that a sitye? Gansey asked. From the age of six. That's the worst toy I've ever seen. Noah grinned. He said, Piss on a rope. They both laughed loudly at Ronan's words coming out of Noah's mouth. The bottom of the clay shape could hide the magnet without Gansey noticing any movement. What's with the slow expression? Noah asked. Slowly, slowly... .. Catchy monkey, Gansey finished it. Noah, don't go. I'm going to ask you a question, and I don't want you to go like always. The dead boy raised his head to meet Gansey's eyes. While he was not transparent or inappropriate looking in any way, he was unwittingly unsettling in this light. his unblinked eyes. It could have been me. I should have been there. Did you hear him? When... when you died? Gansey regretted asking, but he kept going. Did you hear a voice? Noah's fingers touched his sleety face, though he didn't seem to notice. He shook his head. If Gansey and Noah had died on the Ley line at the same time, why did they choose Gansey for life and choose Noah to die? Noah's death was by all rights the most sinous; he was killed for no reason. Gansey was stung by a death that had been scrubbing his steps for more than a decade. I think it's... Cabeswater wanted to be awake, said Noah. He knew I wouldn't do what I had to do, and you would. He couldn't have known that. Noah shook his head again. It's easy to know a lot of things when time isn't straight, but time is up. But, said Gansey, but did not know what he was trying to protest. In fact, it was just the fact of Noah's slow death, and it didn't seem like anyone could control the protest. He touched one ear; He could feel the spirok of the wasp crawling through him. If we find Glendower, I'm asking him to heal you. As a favor. He didn't like to say it out loud; Not because he didn't mean it, but because it wasn't clear whether the favor worked or if it worked at all and he didn't like false promises. Noah messed with his clay man. He was no longer much of a man; Just because Gansey has already seen it, he still saw the suggestion of the figure in the nondescript bunch. I know, I know. This... That's very kind of you. But...? Don't be afraid, Noah said it out of the blue. He reached out and pulled Gansey's hand out of his ear. Gansey didn't even realize he was still softly affected. Leaning forward, Noah blew his cold, dead breath into Gansey's ear. There's nothing there. You're just tired. Gansey trembled a little. Because it was Noah, and no one else, Gansey admitted, I don't know what I'm going to do when I find him, Noah. I don't know what I'm going to do if I don't look for it. I don't know what it is to be that man again. Noah put the clay in Gansey's hands. That's exactly how I feel about the idea of resusking. 17 Tell me my future, Blue said that night, threw himself in front of Calla, who covered the reading room table with receipts. The whole 300 Fox Way was howlingly loud; Orla had another group, just like Orla's mother, Jimi. Plus, Trinity – Jimi's sister or cousin or friend – brought over about a thousand little cousins or something to make soap. The reading room was the quietest place. Tell me if I'm an orphan in it. Go away, Calla said, punching buttons in a He and Maura usually worked on the house's finances together, Calla operates the calculator as an adult, and Maura sits cross-legged in the middle of the table nearby. But there was no Maura this time. I'm busy. I think I actually don't know, Blue said. I think that's it. You and Persephone pretend to be wise, and oh, he has to find his own way into the world blah blah, but you're really just saying that because you have no idea. That's the paperwork, Calla said. And you're a pest. Go away. Blue picked up a handful of receipts and threw them in Calla's face. Calla looked at him through the flapping sheet and didn't move. They settled on the table. Blue and Calla were staring at each other. I'm so sorry, blue said, shrinking. I really am. He started picking up one of the bills, and Calla grabbed her wrist. No, he said. Blue's shoulders are more slumped. Calla said, Look. This isn't easy for either of us. You're right, I'm sorry. We've never seen Cabeswater, and now it's harder to see everything else when it's just the two of us. It's harder to agree when there's no tiebreaker, especially when it comes to tiebreaker... His face has changed. There are three sleepers. You already told me that. That's what everyone told me. Well, I think your job is to wake one of them, and I think it's Maura's job not to wake her up again. It's just two jobs and three sleepers. Persephone and I do not agree slightly with the existence of a third job or not. Page 15 Blue asked: What kind of work are we talking about here anyway? Like a job where we take out our salaries and end up pulling our faces up against the wall of a magical forest with epoch's most valuable employee? A job like this ends up in balance, and we all live happily ever after. Well, that sounds good, except what about that sleeper in the middle and b. you can't finish a negative job ever, i.e., when mom knows she successfully hasn't woken someone up, and three, does that still involve Gansey's death? Because f, that's not my idea of a happy ending. I'm sorry about this conversation, Calla said, and began stacking receipts. G, I don't want to go to school anymore. Well, you're not going to leave, so I'm sorry for your loss. I didn't say I was quitting. It's just that I have very low job satisfaction right now. Morale is low. Soldiers don't want to go to community college. Calla cut another button on the calculator. His mouth took a very impressed shape. Soldiers shouldn't whine about someone who worked their ass off to go to community college. It will be one of those I climbed both ways to Thing? Because if so – This is a must-go-entemplant-your-entitlement-Blue-Sargent-thing. Blue, shame, huffed and stood up. Anyway, whatever. Where's the list of church guards? That doesn't make Gansey any less dead. Calla. It's in the box above the fridge, I think. Blue stormed out of the room, deeply dissatisfied, and pulled a chair throughordes of soap-making children into the fridge. Of course, he found the church clocks in the box at the top. He pushed the entire collection through the hardworking children and then went out the sliding door into the dark courtyard. It was immediately quieter. The yard was empty, except for some moms waiting to be planted, the huge beech tree with the large yellow canopy, and the Grey Man. He sat so softly in one garden chair that Blue didn't notice until he turned to the other. Oh, that's it! Sorry. Are you having a good time? I can go back. His expression was pensive. He tipped his mostly full beer towards the other chair. No, I'm the intruder. I should ask you if you want this place for yourself. He flapped a diffident's hand towards him as he sat. The night smells of foxy and damp, with all the rain and failed leaf fires. For a moment, they sat quietly as Blue sniffed through the newspapers, and grey man watched over his beer. The breeze was cool, and the Grey Man put down his coat, without a particular ceremony, and handed it to Blue. As he draped it over his shoulder, he asked, So, what's there? Sonettes, I hope. Blue drummed his fingers on the sides, thinking about how to sum it up. Every May, we hold a vigil and see the souls of the people who will die within a year. We ask for their names, and if they're customers, we let the living know that we've seen their souls so they can fix things. This is a list of names. Are you okay? Oh, yes, I'm just, it's, eyelids in my eyes or something, Blue said, wiping his right eye. What's this face for? The ethical and spiritual consequences are dazzling. Isn't that right? Blue kept the latest list over his head, so the kitchen lamp illuminated his handwriting. Oh, yes. What's going on? He just found what he was looking for: JESSIE DITLEY. He misst wrote, but still. Blue leaned back. Gansey and I met someone, and I thought I remembered their name. And there it is. Yes, that's it. The thing is, I don't know if he's going to die because we're in his life, or because we're not, or if he's going to die either way. The grey man rested his neck on the back of his chair and looked at the low clouds reflecting Henrietta's light. Fate versus mere prediction? I'm guessing you know more about how psychic business works. Blue shrunk further into his coat than the weed bee leaves. I only know what they said. And what did they tell you? He liked the way he asked. It was less that he needed the information and rather that he enjoyed his company. It seemed strange that he felt the least lonely and restless, that he was sitting here with her, not With Calla or Persanfon. He felt more eyelids sticking in his eyes. Mom says it's like a memory,' Blue said. Instead of looking backwards, you look forward. Remembering the future. Because time isn't like that - he drew a line. That's right - He drew a circle. So I guess if you think like that, it's not that we can't change the future. It's that when you see the future, it already reflects the changes you may have made based on seeing the future. I don't know. I don't know! Because mom always tells people that her reading is promises, not guarantees. So you can break your promise. Some warranties, too, the Grey Man noted, sound wry. And then all of a sudden, Maura's on the list? Blue shook his head. He was born in West Virginia. The church guard only shows that people who were born in the area. Or, in the case of Richard Gansey III: reborn. Mr. Gray asked: Can I see you? He handed it over and watched the slow-moving letters overhead as he made his way to the names. How much he loved this bee- tree. As often as a little girl she came out to put her hands against a cool, smooth crust, or sat herself on twisted, exposed roots. He once wrote her a letter, remembered it, and put it in a pen holder that was stuck in the roots. They've grown around the box a long time ago, completely hidden. Now he wished he could read the letter again, since all he remembered was its existence, not its contents. Mr. Gray is still gone. Careful, did you say Gansey? Last name on the last page. He just chewed on his lower lip. Know? He shook his head, just a little bit. Do you know how long? He shook his head again. His eyes were strong on him, and then he just sighed and nodded, in solidarity that he was left behind, who wasn't on the list. Finally, he said, Breaking a lot of promises, Blue. He inged his beer. He folded the paper to hide JESSIE DITLEY and then reveal it again. In the dark, he said, do you love my mother? He looked through the leaves' darker butts. Then he nodded. Me, too. He bent his index finger grimly. Frowning, he said, I didn't want to put your family in danger. I know you don't. I don't think that's what anyone thinks. I have a decision to make, he said. Or a plan. I think I'll do it by Sunday. What's magical about Sunday? This is a date that used to be very important to me, Man told me. And it seems that this day I'm starting to be the person your mother thinks I can be. I hope the person my mother thought might be the person who would find the mothers, Blue replied. He stood up and stretched himself out. - Helm seal cenum, a þas heanan hyge horde on unginnost. Does that mean I'm going to be a hero? He smiled and said: His cowardly heart is not a prize, but the man of valiant deserves his shining helmet. So what I said, he replied. Basically, 18 Gansey didn't sleep. Since Blue didn't have a cell phone, there was no way he could break the rules and call her. Instead, she started instead lying in her bed every night, eyes closed, hands rested on her phone, waiting to see if she was going to call him on the phone/Seam/Cat Room in his house. Stop it, he told you. Stop wants - The phone buzzed. He put it to his ear. I see you're still not in Congress. He was awake. Looking at Ronan's locked bedroom door, Gansey got his wireframes and diary and climbed out of bed. He locked himself in the kitchen laundry and sat in front of the fridge. Gansey, what's going on? I'm here, he said softly. What do you know about blue-winged blue-winged blue? A break. Is that what you're talking about in Congress when the doors are locked? Yes, yes, I'm sorry. Is that a duck? Ding! Point to Fox Way. The bank holiday crowd is going wild! Did you know that during the summer, they become flightless for a month when they discard all their flying pens at once? Blue asked, Isn't this all duck? Is that it? That's the problem with Congress. Don't be funny to me, sargent, Gansey said. Jane, it's not my fault. Did you know that blue-winged blue-winged blue must eat a hundred grams of protein to replace 60 grams of body and tail feathers? I don't. That's about 31,000 spineless people they have to eat. Are you taking notes? No, no, no, no, Gansey closed his journal. Well, that was very instructive. It always is. Okay, then. There was another break, and Gansey realized he hung up. He leaned back for the fridge, eyes closed, guilty, comforted, wild. He'd be waiting for this again in 24 hours. You know better, you know better: What the hell, man? Ronan told me. Gansey's eyes opened as Ronan hit the lights. He stood at the door, headphones looped around his neck, chainsaw hulking like a gentle thug on his shoulder. Ronan's eyes found the phone near Gansey's feet, but he didn't ask, and Gansey didn't say anything. Ronan would hear a lie in an instant, and the truth wasn't possible. Jealousy ruined Ronant in the first few months of Adam's introduction to the group; That would hurt him even more. he couldn't sleep, Gansey said candidly. And then after a break, you're not trying to kill Greenmantle, are you? Ronan's jaw has risen. His smile was sharp and humorless. No, no, no, no, I've come up with a better option. Do I want to know what it is? Is this acceptance of the pointlessness of revenge? The smile widened and sharpened even more. That's not your problem, Gansey. It was more dangerous when he wasn't angry. And he was right: Gansey didn't want to know. Ronan opened the fridge door and pushed Gansey across the floor by an inch. He pulled out a soda and handed Chainsaw a cold, hot dog. Then he looked at Gansey again. Hey, I heard this great song, he said. Gansey tried to turn off the raven's voice snoring a hot dog. Do you want to hear it? Gansey and Ronan rarely agreed on music, but Gansey shrugged. Ronan removed his headphones from his neck and placed them on Gansey's ear – they smelled a little dusty and birdlike from the proximity of the chainsaw. Sound came through the headphones: Squash one, squash w - Gansey ripped them off as Ronan dissolved into manic laughter, which Chainsaw echoed, fluttered wings, both of them terrible and amused. You bastard, Gansey said wildly. You bastard. You betrayed my trust. It's the best song he's ever found, Ronan told him, laughing with bated breath. He's pulled himself back together. Come on, bird, let's give him some privacy with his food. As he left, he turned off the lights and took Gansey back into the dark. Gansey heard him flick the rest of the killer squash song on his way to his room. Gansey pushed himself to his feet, collected his phone and diary, and then went back to bed. The guilt and worry were gone by the time he put his head in the pillow, and all that was left was happiness. 19 Gansey forgot how much time the school occupied. Maybe it's because he's got more to do with it outside of school now, or maybe it's because now, he couldn't get it out of my head at school, even if he wasn't involved. Green man. Fuck! Gansey, it's not my fault. Gansey boy! Richard Campbell Gansey, third. The Gansey in question swept through your colonnaded with Ronan and Adam after school on his way to the office. Although he was faintly aware of the shouting, his mind was too noisy for the words to be heard. Part of it was donated to Greenmantle, partly to uncover Maura's disappearance, part to uncover Malory's perpendicular ley line, part to the ravens' den, and partly to the knowledge that in seven hours Blue could call her. And one last, anxious part - a growing part - was preoccupied with the color of the autumn sky, the leaves on the ground, the sense that over time without having to replace it with waning and spoiling to the end. It was a uniformly free day in honor of the school's victory. Regional quiz bowl, and the lack of uniforms somehow worsened Gansey's anxiety. His classmates on the historic campus in vests, plaid pants and branded sweaters. He reminded her that he still exists and has no other time. The other students have nominated themselves as unmistakable residents of this century, this decade, this year, this season, in this income category. Human clocks. It wasn't until we all returned from the same Navy V-neck sweaters that Aglionby slipped out of time, and each time it began to feel like it was actually the same time. Page 16 Sometimes Gansey felt like he'd spent the last seven years of his life chasing places where he felt that way. Green man. Every morning this week began Greenmantle stood first in latin class, forever smiling. Ronan didn't come for the first period. There's no way he'd have qualified if he failed latin, but Gansey can blame him? The walls have fallen. Adam asked me why Gansey had to go to the office. Gansey lied. He's done fighting Adam Parrish. Ganseeeeeey! The night before, Mr. Gray said to Ronan, Dream me a Greywans to give you greenmantle. And Ronan said, You want me to give that son of a bitch Cabeswater's keys? Is that what you're asking? So you're at a dead end. Gansey boy! Fuck. Ronan spind and walked backwards to face the shouter. He spread his arms. Not now, Cheng, The King is a little busy. I wasn't talking to you, Lynch. I need someone with a soul. The light that glittered from Ronan's snarlings caught Gansey's eye and brought him back to the present. He checked his steps and watch before going back to Henry, who was sitting at a card table between columns. His hair looked like a jet black fire. The two boys exchanged comrade handshakes on the table. They had a few things in common: before quitting last fall, Gansey was once captain of the team, and Henry once signed up for breakfast before scratching out his name at dinnertime. Gansey was in Ecuador; Henry once did a model photo shoot with a racehorse called Ecuador in Love. Gansey was once killed by a wasp; Henry's family business was at the forefront of designing robot drone bees. The two boys were friendly, but not friends. Henry ran with the Vancouver crowd and Gansey ran with dead Kings of Wales. What can I do for you, Mr. Cheng? Gansey asked pleasantly. Henry's got it. See, Ronan? That's how you talk to a man. Glad. It's you. I asked, Gansey. Look, I need your help. Sign this. Gansey observed this. The wording was fairly formal, but there appeared to be a petition to create a student chosen by the student council. You want me to vote for the right to vote? You grabbed my much faster than our other contemporaries. I can see why you're always in the newsletter. Henry offered him a pen, and when Gansey didn't take it right away, a marker and then a pencil. Instead of accepting the writing tool, Gansey tried to decide whether the petition's signature was promised at any time. Rex Corvus, parate Regis Corvi. Gansey, come on, Henry said. They'll listen to you. Your vote counts twice because you're white with big hair. You're Aglionby's golden boy. The only way to get more points is for your mom to revive that place. Ronan grinned at Adam. Gansey rubbed a thumb on his lower nip, and he knew uncomely that Henry had not said anything untrue. He never found out how much of his place was earned here, and how much was left with his gilded ancestry. He was a little bothered. Now he's really bothered. I'll sign it, but I want to exempt you from the nominations. Gansey accepted a pen. My plate is full. Henry rubbed his hands together. Sure, man, Parrish? Adam just shook his head. He did it in a remote, cool way that didn't invite Henry to ask again. Henry said, Lynch? Ronan flicked his eyes from Adam to Henry. I thought you said I didn't have a soul. He didn't look at all of Aglionby only then, with his severed head and black biker jacket and expensive jeans. He seemed like a full-grown-up. Gansey thought it was like time had taken Ronan a little faster than the others this summer. Who are these two? Gansey wondered. What are we going to do? It turns out that politics has already eroded my principles, said Henry. Ronan picked out a high-calcium marker and leaned deep over the petition. He wrote ANARCHY in huge letters and then threw the war device at Henry's chest. Hey, I'm sorry. Henry cried as the marker bounced off him. You gangster. Democracy is a farce, Ronan said, and Adam grinned, a private, small thing that was inherently exclusionary. An expression he could have learned from Ronan. Gansey spared Henry a pity. I'm sorry, he didn't have enough exercise today. Or there's something wrong with his diet. I'm going to take it now. When I'm elected president, Henry told Ronan, I'll make your face illegal. Ronan's smile was thin and dark. Litigation is a farce. As he headed back to the shady colonn, Gansey asked: Have you ever thought about the possibility that you can grow up to be a donkey**down? Ronan kicked a piece of gravel. He slid through the bricks in front of them before jumping out into the grassy yard. Rumor has it that his father gave him a Fisker for his birthday, and he's too afraid to drive. I want to see if he's got it. Rumor has it he rode his bike here. Vancouver? Adam asked. Gansey as a couple of impossibly young ninth grades ran through the yard – ever had that little one? He knocked on the principal's door. Am I doing this? That's what it was. Are you waiting for me here? No, Ronan said. Parrish and I are going for a drive. Are we? Adam asked. Good, Gansey said. He's relieved they're doing something, they don't think about the principal, they're not surprised gansey ended up acting like a Gansey. I'll see you later. And before they could say anything else, he let himself in and closed the door. 20 Ronan took Adam to the Barn. Since the disastrous fourth of July party, Ronan has disappeared into his family home and returned without explanation. Adam was never proud - secrets were secrets - but he could not deny that he was curious. Now it looked like he was going to find out. He's always found Barns disturbing. The Lynch family's property may not have carried the patina of the lush property of the Gansey house, but it made up for it with more than a claustrophobic history. These barn-encrusted fields were an island unset by the rest of the valley, mementoed by Niall Lynch's imagination and grazed by his dreams. That was a different world. Ronan was navigating the narrow driveway. The gravel cut through an embankment and a bunch of twisted wood. The cherry-red leaves of the sizzle and the blood spikes of the raspberry grapes flashed between the trunks. Everything else was green here: canopy thick enough to block the afternoon sun, grass rippling up the banks, moss clinging wet. Then they cross the woods, the vast, protected fields. Here it was even more saturated: green and golden pastures; stables red and white; dense, messy autumn roses hanging from crowded bushes; purple, sleepy mountains half hidden behind the tree line. Yellow apples, bright as butter, peek at the trees on one side of the drive. Some blue flower, unlikely, dreamed, was a spree in the grass on the other side. Everything was wild and raw. But those are the Lynches. Ronan made a big flashy sideways slide at the end of the drive - Adam silently reached to keep the strap on the ceiling - and the BMW worn carelessly into the gravel car park in front of the white farmhouse. One day, you're going to blow a sidewall, Adam said, as he got out of the car. Of course, Ronan agreed. He climbed out of the car and looked up into the branches of plum trees next to the parking lot. As always, Adam was reminded that Ronan belonged here. Something about the familiar way he stood as he searched for ripe fruit suggests that he has done it many times before. It made it easy to understand that Ronan grew up here and would grow old here. It's easy to see how he was banished to cut out his soul. Adam allowed himself a longing moment to an Adam Parrish grew out of these areas, but also a dusty park outside Henrietta - an Adam Parrish who allowed him to want this home for himself. But it was as impossible as to imagine Ronant Aglionby as a teacher. He didn't know how Ronan learned to be wild in this protected place. Ronan found two black-and-purple plums he liked. He threw one at Adam and then yanked his jaw to indicate that Adam had to follow. For some reason, Adam struck it in his head that every time Ronan disappeared from the Barns, he was preparing for the house himself and Matthew. It was such a persuasive idea that he was surprised when Ronan showed him around the farm to take him to one of the stables built on the property. It was a large, long barn that was supposed to hold horses or cattle, but instead contained garbage. A closer examination revealed that it was actually dream eyes, gently dust and fading. Ronan easily passed through the dim expanse, picking up the watch, the lantern, a strangely clothed screw that somehow hurt Adam to look at it. Ronan found a kind of spooky light on the strap; he threw it over his shoulder to bring it with him. She was already scarfing after her plums. Adam stayed at the door and watched through the dust particles to keep the plum last. Is that what you're working on? No, it's dad's. Ronan recorded a little string instrument. He turned it around so Adam could see that his strings were made of pure gold. Take a look at this. Adam joined him. Although he had homework to do and Cabeswater cared for, it was hard to feel rushed. In the barn, the air was sleepy and timeless, and there was nothing unpleasant about being researched through miracles and nonsense. Some of the things in the barn were machines that were still running with mysterious tools. But others were things that Niall Lynch could come alive about because they were asleep. They found sleeping birds between the clutter and a sleeping cat, and an old-fashioned stuffed bear that had to be alive as well because his chest rose and fell off. With the death of their creator, they were all vigilant— unless they were taken back to Cabeswater like Ronan's mother. As they passed through the old barn, Adam felt Ronan's eyes gaze down at him and away, his lack of interest practiced but incomplete. Adam was wondering if anyone else noticed. Part of him wished they had done it, and he immediately felt bad because it was vanity, really: See, Adam Parrish is wantable, worthy of love, not just anyone, someone like Ronan, who might want Gansey or anyone else and chose Adam as his hungry eyes. Maybe he was wrong. Maybe he's was. I'm inglorable, Ronan Lynch. You want to see what I'm working on? Ronan asked. Just be cool. Sure, Adam replied. Just be cool. Stopped only by the strap of ghost light over a fence column for subsequent retrieval, Ronan led Adam through the wet a barn they visited earlier. Adam knew what he was going to find before Ronan opened the big, rusty door, and of course enough, he had a huge herd of cattle in every corner. Like all living things in these barns, they slept. Expected. Inside, the light is dull and brown, filtered through dirt covered skylights from far above the roof. It smelled warm, alive, familiar as hair, shit and humidity. Who dreamed of a herd of cattle? No wonder Cabeswater couldn't show up until Ronan's father died. Even Ronan and Kavinsky's careless dream sucked enough power off the Ley line to make the forest disappear. They were trinkets, drugs, cars. They're not fields full of living things. It's not a fictional valley. That was the reason Greenmantle couldn't even have a fake Greywaren. Cruel Cabeswater is strangely fragile. Ronan came to the door in the barn; Behind him was a tagged office. There was enough dust everywhere to make dirt, On the table, yellowed veterinary records and news feed receipts. They kept ancient cokes in a dumpster. Frameless prints were covered on the walls - a flyer for some Irish folk bands who played in New York; a vintage print of some children running on a remote, older pier in a remote, older country. It was so different from what Adam's father pinned to the walls of the work site that Adam once again considered Ronan's admiration. Someone like him treats someone like Adam as someone worthy – Ronan swore as he stumbled. He found the light switch, and a benign fluorescent came over their heads. It was full of dead flies. In the slightly better light, Adam saw dust-free paths leading from the table to an office chair by the wall. The blanket embedded in the chair— not dusty — and it was not difficult to imagine the form in which a young man sleeps in it. There was something unexpectedly lonely in the picture. Ronan pulled a metal tack out of the wall and knocked over the lid with a fantastic impact. I was trying to wake up my father's dreams. What's going on? They're not dead. Sleep. If I dragged them to Cabeswater, they'd stand up and walk away. So I started thinking, why don't I bring cabeswater to them? Adam wasn't sure what he expected, but that wasn't it. For the cows. Some of us have families, Parrish. Aurora's trapped in Cabeswater. Of course Ronan would want me to come and go. Ashamed, Adam replied: I'm sorry. Has. It's not just that. It's Matthew - Ronan is devastated, very completely, and Adam understood. It was another secret, a Ronan wasn't ready to tell me. After a moment of rummaging through the box, Ronan turned around with a clear glass ball in his hand. The air inside is misty shimmering. It was nice, something you'd hang in the garden or in an old lady's kitchen. He found Adam safe. Not too Page 17 Ronan held him up to the light. The inner air rolled from side to side. Maybe it's not air at all. Maybe it's a liquid. Adam saw it reflected in his blue eyes. Ronan said: That was my first try. You dreamed it. Of course you don't, and Cabeswater? Ronan seemed offended. Asked. He asked. It's so simple. It's like it's easy for him to communicate with this organization, which can only learn about itself in front of Adam through big and violent gestures. The dream that had some Cabeswater in it, Ronan continued, and intoned. If it works the dream, it works in real life. Works? Give me the short version. Asshole. No, it's not. It really sucks. Ronan dug himself back through the tack box, highlighting the other failed attempts, all of them mysterious. A shimmering ribbon, a bunch of grass that still grows out of a piece of dirt from a forked branch. He let Adam keep a few; they all felt strange. It's too heavy as gravity weighted them more than it should. And they smelled vaguely familiar, like Ronan or Cabeswater. If Adam thought of it - or rather, if he didn't think about it - he felt the pulse of the Ley line at all. I had a bag of sand, Ronan said, but I spilled it. I dreamed for hours. He drove an hour every day to park his car and curl up in this chair and sleep alone. Why here? Why did you come here to do it? Toneless, Ronan said: Sometimes I dream of wasps. Adam imagined it then: Ronan woke up at Monmouth Manufacturing, a dream object clutching wasps clutching in his hand, crawling in his bedding, Gansey couldn't get in the other room. No, he couldn't have had a wild dream in Monmouth. Lonely. Aren't you afraid you're going to get hurt on your own? Adam asked. Ronan was me. He's afraid for his own life. But there was something else in his eyes. He studied his hands and admitted: I dreamed him of a box of EpiPens. I always dream of cures for stings. I've got one. I put it in the Pig. They're all over Monmouth. Adam felt cruel and cruel hope. Work? I don't know, I don't know. And there's no way to find out before it happens. There's not going to be a rematch. Ronan took two objects

out of the tack and got up. Here it is. Time for a field trip. Let's go to the lab. With one arm, he propped up a bright blue polar blanket to his body. On the other, he drated a piece of moss like a waiter's towel. Do you want me to take one with me? Adam asked. Fuck, no. Adam got him the door. In the barn's large room, Ronan walked among the cows, stopped to look into their faces or pulled his head up to observe the markings. He finally stopped a chocolate brown cow with a jagged stripe off his friendly face. He pushed his immobile side motionless with the toe of his boots and explained: works better if it seems more ... I don't know. Particular. If it looks like something I've dreamed of myself. It looked like a cow to Adam. So, what about this one? It looks f**cool friendly. Cattle, the boy wizard. He put the blue blanket on the floor. Carefully. Then he ordered you to feel his pulse. Don't just stare. Pulse. On his face. There, there. Here, Parrish, my God. It's right there. Adam carefully followed his fingers on the cow's short facial hair until he felt the animal's slow pulse. Ronan wrapped his moss blanket in the cow's wither. What about now? Ronan wasn't sure what he was supposed to see. He didn't feel anything, nothing, nothing - ah, but he was there. The cow's pulse was accelerating. Once again, he imagined Ronan to be here alone, so hopeful of change that he would have noticed such a subtle difference. He was more devoted than ronan thought Lynch was. Lonely. He said, Are you any closer than that? Ronan has me. Did you think that's all I was going to show you? There's another one. Do you have to pee first? I. No, seriously. I'm fine, I'm fine. Ronan turned to the other object he brought out. It wasn't the blue blanket adam expected, it was something wrapped in the blanket. Whatever was in there, it couldn't be bigger than a shoebox or a big book. It didn't seem too hard. And if Adam's eyes didn't fool him, Ronan Lynch was afraid of him. Ronan took a deep breath. Okay, Parrish. He unpacked it. Adam was looking. Then he looked away. Then he looked back. It was a book, he thought. Then he didn't know why he thought it was a book; it was a bird. No, it's a planet. It's a mirror. None of them were. It was just a word. It was a cupped word in Ronan's hands that he wanted to be loudly said, but he didn't want to, but actually he did - Then Adam looked away again because he couldn't keep an eye on it anymore. He could feel it going crazy if he tried to name it. What is that? Asked. Ronan looked at him, but sideways, his jaw decided from him. He looked younger than usual, his face softened by uncertainty and caution. Sometimes Gansey told stories about the Ronan he knew before Niall died; Now that I'm looking at this fallible Ronan, Adam thought he might be able to believe them. Ronan said: A piece of Cabeswater. It's a piece of a dream. That's what I asked for. And this ... that's what I think it should look like, probably. Adam felt the truth. It was this horrible, impossible and beautiful object that was a dream when there was nothing to live in. Who was the person who could dream a specific form of a dream? No wonder Aglyon bore Ronan. Adam checked it out. He looked away. He said, Does it work? Ronan's expression sharpened. He kept the dream thing next to Face. Light, or something like that light, reflected onto Ronan's jaw and face, which made him sharp and handsome and scary and someone else. Then he blew it away. His breath went through the word, the mirror, the unwritten line. Adam heard a whisper in his ear. Something moved and moved in it. Ronan's eyelashes fluttered dark. What do we do - The cow has shifted. Not much. But his head bowed; one ear flicked. It's like he's pushing a bee sleepily. A muscle trembled near his spine. Ronan's eyes were open; there was a fire in them. He was breathing again, and the cow twitched his ears again. He's got a tight lip. But he didn't wake up and he didn't rise. He retreated, hiding the dream from adam's frenking sight. I'm missing something yet, Ronan said. Tell me what I missed. Maybe you just can't wake up someone else's dream. Ronan shook his head. He didn't care if it was impossible. He was going to do it anyway. Adam gave me the Power. It takes a lot of energy. Most of what I do when I repair ley line is making better connections so the energy runs more efficiently. Maybe you could find a way to control part of the line. I've thought about it. I don't care. I don't want to make a bigger cage. I want to open the door. They looked at each other. Adam's fair and careful, Ronan's dark and incendiating. That was Ronan's most honest. Adam asked: Why? Tell me the real reason. Matthew - Ronan started again and stopped again. Adam was waiting. Ronan said: Matthew is mine. He's one of my men. Adam didn't get it. I dreamt him. Adam. Ronan was angry - every single emotion that had no happiness was anger. This means that if - if something happens to me, he will be like them. Just like mom. All the memories Adam possessed of Ronan, and his brother reframed himself. Ronan's tireless devotion. Matthew's resemblance to Aurora, a dream being. Declan's eternal position as an outsider, not as a dreamer, not as a dream. Only half of Ronan's surviving family was real. Declan told too bad. Declan too well, Ronan said. A few Sundays ago. Declan went to college in D.C., but still made the four-hour drive every Sunday to attend church with his siblings, a gesture so extravagant that even Ronan seemed forced to admit that it was kindness. You didn't know? I was three years old. What did I know? Ronan turned away, lashes low above his eyes, expression hidden, burdened by birth, not made. Lonely. Adam sighed and sat down next to the cow, leaning against his warm body, and letting his slow breath lift him up. After a moment, Ronan slipped down next to him, and the two looked at the sleepers. Adam felt Ronan glance at him and be away. Their shoulders were close. Above our heads, rain began to tap on the roof again, another Storm. Maybe it's their fault. Greenmantle, Ronan said suddenly. His bedroom. I want to wrap it around his neck. Mr. Gray is right. You can't kill him. I don't want to kill him. I want to do to him what he threatens me with. To show him how I can make his life hell. If I can dream of that - Ronan yanked his jaw toward the blanket that kept his dream object - surely I can dream of something to blackmail him with. Adam took that into account. How hard would it be to frame someone if you could bring me any evidence you need? Could it be that Greenmantle couldn't undo it and found them twice as dangerous? You're smarter than me,' Ronan said. Guess what. Adam has issued a disbelief. Didn't you ask me to search greenmantle in all my spare time? yes, and now I'm going to tell you why I asked you. Why me? Ronan suddenly laughed. This voice, as crooked and joyous and terrible as the dream in his hand, should have woken these cattle up if nothing else had done. I heard if you want magic done, he said, ask the magician. 21 It was too late when Blue called that night, long after Malory returned to the Suburban, long after Ronan returned to bmw. No one else was awake. Gansey, what's going on? Blue asked. There's something uneasy about him, it's calmed down. Tell me a story, he said. From the Ley line. He immediately went to the kitchen-bathroom-laundry, moved as softly as he did, thought something to say to him. As he sat on the ground, he said softly: When I was in Poland, I met a guy who sang his way across Europe. He said as long as he sang, he'd always find his way back. Blue's voice was quiet at the other end of the phone. I assume you mean a dead road, not a freeway. Mystical interstate. Gansey grazed his hand through his hair, remembering. I walked about 20 miles with him. I had a GPS. He had the song. He was right, too. I could have turned him around a million times and misled him two million times, and he could always go back to the Ley line. It's like he was magnetized. While he was singing. Was it always the same song? Was it the killer squash song? Oh, my God. The floor tiles felt cool at the barefoot bottom. For some reason, the sensation is sensual and disturbing, reminiscent of Blue's skin. Gansey closed his eyes. It was a simpler time before it unleashed him into the world. I can't believe how Ronan and Noah are obsessed with this song. Ronan was talking about the t-shirt. Can you imagine it? It's blue. What happened to the Polish guy? I assume you're singing your way through Russia. He went from left to right. West-east, I mean. What was it that such as? It's prettier than you think. It's so beautiful. Stopped. I'd like to go one day. He didn't give himself time to doubt the wisdom to say it out loud before he replied, I know how to get there if you want company. After a long pause Blue said in a different tone: I'm going to sing myself to sleep. See you tomorrow. If you want company. The phone went quiet. It was never enough, but there was something. Gansey opened his eyes. Noah was sitting at the doorway of the kitchen-bathroom-laundry. When Gansey thought about it, he thought he might have been sitting there for a long time. There was nothing inherently sinful at the moment, except that Gansey was burned with guilt and excitement and desire and a foggy feeling that was truly known. It was inside, and the inside was everything Noah ever paid attention to. The other boy wore a conscious expression. Don't tell the others, Gansey said. I'm dead, Noah replied. He's not stupid. 22 I'm very angry with you, Piper said, sound very tight. Greenmantle lay on top of the surrogate rental, his arms crossed over his chest, and his knees close together, thinking of early medieval burial positions. I know, Greenmantle answered, opened his eyes. Above the sky was sarcastically blue. What's going on now? The blood-taking people were here today, and you weren't. I told you to be here. Page 18: I was here. He spent the first hour coming home, lying on his face. A small percentage of medieval bodies were buried as such; historians believed that suicides or tombs of witches, although in fact historians were such Guesser McGuessers, he is the largest of them all. You didn't answer when I called. That doesn't change the fact that I was here. Should I have looked for you in the car? Why are you even here? There's a creative block, Greenmantle said. What? He turned to face it. She was standing next to the car, wearing a dress that looked like it had a tired number of steps to remove. He also kept a small animal with a jeweled collar. Is that can't have hair part from a long, silky tassel that grew on her head, the exact same shade of blonde that Piper sported. What's that there? Greenmantle asked. He deeply suspected that this was a physical manifestation of his bad mood. Otho, I'm sorry. He sat up. The rental car sighed loudly. She had a cat? A rodent? What race, pray? Otho is a Chinese crested. Chinese crested what? Don't be such a dick. Because Greenmantle had people to pant and follow him around with mindless loyalty, he never felt the urge to be a dog, but when he was younger, he sometimes imagined acquiring a dog with a fringed tail and legs. The kind who picked up ducks, whatever it was. Otho looked like Maybe the ducks pick him up instead. Is it going to get bigger? Or grow hair? Where did it come from? I ordered it. From the Internet? Piper had her eyes on her innocence. Why do you have a creative block again? I have to find Mr. Gray's psychic girlfriend, but it turns out no one knows where he is. He disappeared when he tricked me. Greenmantle slipped off the car. Carefully. He was stiff about his air funeral. How do I destroy what you need when it's gone? He's been reported missing and everything. I stole the report, and he said he obviously told his family he was underground. He didn't steal the report. He paid someone to steal the report. But the story sounded better with him than the hero. Piper said, Underground? Psychic? It's important for my interests. Why? While you were out there, I did things, he said. Follow me. He led her through the garage and through a door she didn't know about, and she went up to the house. The stairs are widened in the hallway in the bedroom. He said, Haven't you read any of Mr. Gray's reports? He stared at her, indicating she didn't understand the question. He said slowly as if he were an idiot, when he was here looking for this stupid thing for you. Did you read what he wrote back to you? Tracking? Oh, they are. Of course you don't. Then why did you ask him to send them away? It was a million. I just wanted him to feel busy and listen. There's nothing like paperwork that makes you feel oppressed. Why? Piper opened the cupboard door to reveal a collection of packages with shipping labels bearing her name on them. Otho probably arrived in one of them. I read them in the bathroom. Then I read the other reports from the other barely literate bandits you hired. Then I read the news. Greenmantle didn't care if he read the Grey Man's letters naked. He opened one of the boxes and looked inside. What are they? Knee pads, he said, and put them to prove it. He was resily pleased with that. That horrible man was talking about these underground psychic energy lines that hindered his search because they were so powerful. I thought stronger was better. I thought I'd like to see what's strong because I'm bored in my head. And how hard is it to find them? That's why I ordered these things. Knee pads? I don't care if I break a kneecap while I'm wandering underground. Doesn't it look like The Grey Man's crazy psychic bitch is in the same place as these crazy psychic lines? Lucky for you, I bought you some knee pads, too. He was so impressed with his ingenuity. You shouldn't have, really, because He was a very brilliant creature. He just didn't usually use his powers for good, and when he did, he wasn't usually pointed at. He just didn't think he really liked her. Because he was so pleased with himself that he didn't have the heart to tell him that he would have rather paid someone else to go underground to find the Grey Man's girlfriend. And the dress, as it turned out, had a concealed zipper and came off very easily. Piper left her knee pads on. After that, Greenmantle realized that he had forgotten that the dog was there, which seemed vaguely tasteless. So there will be a caver, he said. I don't know what that means. She's an ant-woman. In the most basic language sense, you'll be an antwoman. Anyway, whatever. You're coming with me. 23 Blue was not quite as terrible a leader as a frightened one. Since he didn't, as Jesse Dittley pointed out, not eat his greens, he had to adjust the seat as close as possible to the pedal. A performing bear clutched the wheel with grace. Everything on the dashboard was shouting his attention. Lights? Speed! Air on the face? Air on the legs! Fuel engine! Weird bacon symbol? He drove very slowly. The worst part of his horror was how angry he was. There was nothing about the driving process that seemed confusing or unfair to him. He took his exam. He knew what he was doing besides the bacon symbol. Road signs were never disturbed; the right to the road was logical. He was the champion giver. Give it 40 minutes and you can park the Fox Way Ford in parallel wherever you want. But he could never forget that he was a tiny pilot in a multi-thousand-important weapon. That's just because he hasn't practiced enough, Noah said generously, but he grabbed the door knob in a way that seemed unnecessary for the already dead. Of course he didn't practice enough. There was only one car in the Fox Way 300, and there was a lot of demand. Blue could cycle to school, work, and Monmouth Manufacturing, so the car usually fell on people who worked outside the house or running errands. With his current rate of practice-acquisition, Blue imagined he would be comfortable behind the wheel of a car sometime in his forties. This afternoon, however, he managed to claim the car for a few hours. Noah was his only companion on this field trip: Gansey had some raven boy activities, Adam worked or went out of work, and Ronan disappeared into the ether as usual. They were on their way to see Jesse Dittley. We go so slowly, Noah said, craning his neck to stick to the inevitable line behind them. I think I saw a tricycle passing us. Rough. After a protracted journey, Blue joined Jesse Dittley's driveway. The farm seemed less mystical in the sun, less gloomy, cursed and more dirty and rusty. Turning on the handbrake (We're not even on a hill! protesting Noah), he got out and headed to the porch. He was banging on the door. It took him a few tries to open it. When he did, the week was shocked again by his height. He was wearing another white jersey, or maybe it was the same. Their height difference made it difficult to recognize his facial expression. OH, YOU. Yes, Blue reported. Here's my deal: let us explore your cave, and I'll clean your garden. I have good credentials. She leaned in and she stretched, and she accepted the business cards she had made and cut herself to convince the old ladies in her neighborhood to pay for her putting bedding plants. As he read it, he studied his face and body, looking for signs of the underlying disease, some pre-existing conditions that could later hit him. Something other than a cursed cave. He saw nothing but height and higher altitude. Finally, he replied, Are you trying to tell me that you don't like what I've done with the place? Each yard can be used with some flowers, Blue replied. IT'S BLOODY STRAIGHT. He closed the door in his face. Noah, who stood beside him unnoticed, said, Is that what you wanted to do? It wasn't, but before he formulated his next plan, he reopened the door, but this time he was wearing some camouflaged rubber boots. He went out on the porch. HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE? Ma. MA? I'm super fast. He stepped down the stairs and surveyed the yard. It was hard to say if he was analyzing whether Blue was able to pull it off in one afternoon or whether he would skip the run after he disappeared. YOU CAN PUT THINGS IN THE BACK OF THAT CAR. Blue followed his gaze to a rusty brown truck, which he missed with more garbage. Great, he said, and he meant it. It would save him time if he didn't have to drive the car to the dump four times. So, is this a business? IF YOU DO IT TODAY. He gave her an upright thumb. Okay, then. I'm going to work. Time is just snowed out. Jesse looked like he was looking at Noah, but then his eyes slipped off to Blue. He opened his mouth, and for a moment thought he had seen Noah and wanted to say something about him, but in the end he just said, I'm going to put water on the porch. Dogs don't drink it. There were no dogs in the evidence, but it's possible they hid behind one of the discarded dezas in the yard. In any case, he was touched by the gesture. Thank you, he said. That's nice of you. That gratitude obviously gave Jesse the confidence he needed to tell us what he had in mind before. Scratching her chest, she squinted onto her shredded T-shirt and bleached jeans and Boots. You're a little thing. ARE YOU SURE YOU CAN DO THIS? It's a forced perspective. That's because you aeed the vegetables. I'm bigger than I look at you. Do you have a chainsaw? He blinked. YOU'RE CUTTING DOWN TREES? No, no, no, no, no, nanny. While looking for a chainsaw in his house, Blue put on his gloves and got to work. He was the light bit first, picking up bits of scrap metal the size of pieces and cracked plastic buckets with weeds growing through them. Then he pulled beams with nails protrling from them and broken sink rainwater film in the pools. When Jesse Dittley appeared with a chainsaw, he produced oversized rose-tinted sunglasses from the car to serve as an eye protection and began to hack the bigger things in the yard into more manageable pieces. MIND snakes, Jesse Dittley warned on the porch as he paused to catch his breath. Blue didn't understand what he meant until he pointed to the weeds around the porch with an ominous handshake. I get along with snakes, Blue said. Most animals weren't dangerous if you knew how to give them a safety level. She pulled her back with her hands over her sweaty forehead and accepted the glass of water given to her. You don't have to take care of me, you know. I can handle it. You're a weird little thing, Jesse Dittley decided. LIKE AN ANT. He tipped his head back to look at her. What do you think? THE ANTS THAT WERE ON TV. SOUTH AMERICA, AFRICA OR INDIA. THEY CARRY 10 TIMES THEIR OWN WEIGHT. The blue was fluttering, but he said: Each ant is ten times its own weight, isn't it? Normal ants? THEY DID IT BETTER THAN NORMAL ANTS. I wish I could remember how they did it better. So I can tell you. Are you telling me I'm a better ant? Jesse Dittley blushed. DRINK THE WATER. Bent's retired. With a grin, Blue is back at work. Noah was caving in the trunk; he put in a few bags of mulch and some litter plants, and more in the back seat. Halfway through, he pulled out a bag of mulch, ripped it off, and blew up wood chips in the driveway. Oops. Noah, Blue said. Know. As he continued to tidy up his eyes, he carefully picked up every slice of mulch. It was hard work, but satisfying, a bit like vacuuming. It was nice to see the effect right away. The blue was good at sweating and ignored the father of muscles. As the sun went down, the yard darkened, and the sparsy trees looked clearer. He couldn't help but feel he was watching in their presence. Most of them knew it was cabeswater. He would never forget the sound of a tree or the day he discovered that intelligent, alien beings were completely surrounded. These trees were probably just ordinary trees. He was no longer sure if there was such a thing as an ordinary tree. Maybe they were heard in Cabeswater because of the Ley line. Maybe out here, the trees were robbed of their voices. But I'm an element, he thought. He thought he'd shut Noah down before. He wondered if it was possible to do it the other way. Page 19 Sounds exhausting, Noah commented. He wasn't wrong. Blue was exhausted after the church guard in May, when dozens of ghosts pulled out of him. Then maybe a middle ground. So were these trees talking, or was it just the wind? Blue stopped by his skedadd mulch and swings back into his corner. He raised his jaw to look at the trees that closed the Dittley estate. Oaks, thorns, some red buds, a little somia. Talking about? Whispered. There was exactly nothing more or no less than what he felt and heard before: the rattle of leaves, the movement in his feet. It's like the grass itself has moved. It was hard to know exactly where it came from. He thought he heard faint and thin ... tua tir e elintes tir e elintes ... but perhaps only wind, high and impending between shards of branches. He tried to hear it again, to no avail. They're about to lose the light, and however wasn't happy about the idea of him slowly going back into the dark. At least they finally make the truly pleasant part - the planting of flowers, making this look done. Noah had the strength to help in this and knelt next to him in a friendly manner, paving holes in the dirt of the root balls. At one point, though, he looked over the faulty light and caught placing an entire plant in the hole and knocking dirt over it all, flowers as well. Noah! He looked at her, and there was something completely blank on her face. His right hand swept another bunch of dirt over the petals. It was an automatic gesture, as if his hand had been separated from the other hands. Not that, Blue said, not sure what he said, just that he was trying to sound kind and not frightened. Noah, listen to what you're doing. His eyes are infinitely black and fixed on his face in such a way that the rose hair on his neck. His hands moved again and crushed more ground on the flowers. Then he was closer, but the hek didn't see him move. His black eyes were locked on his belt, his head wasn't very boy. There was something about him that was completely Noah-free. The trees trembled over their heads. The sun was almost gone; The most striking thing about his skin was dead protein. The crushed hole in his face where he was first hit. Blue, he said. He's so relieved. But then he added, Lily. Noah as Lily. Blue. He got up, very slowly. But he was no further away from her. Somehow he stood at the same moment as him, perfectly mirrored, with his eyes. It's still on there. His skin was frozen. Toss up your defense, Blue told you. And he did it, imagining the bubble around him, the impenetrable wall - But it was as if inside was the bubble with him, closer than before. No, closer to nose. Even malice is easier to deal with than his blank eyes, the black mirror, which only reflects him. Suddenly, the porch light came, flooded with light over and Noah's body. It was a shady, checked thing. The front door slammed. Jesse Dittley swooped down the stairs, veranda thunder, and strode hugely up them. His hand shot out - Blue thought he would strike him or Noah - and then he lifted something flat between his face and Noah's. It's a mirror. He saw the gravel back; Noah was looking at the reflective side. His eyes are dark, they're go wide open. He put his hand up on his face. Not! He cried. It was like he was scalded. No, no, no, no, he tripped back from Jesse, Blue, and from the mirror, his hands were still pushing him over his eyes. He had that most horrible whiny voice - more awful because now he's starting to sound like Noah again. He tripped backwards in one of the empty pots, landed hard and stayed where he fell, his hands on his face, his shoulders shaking. No, no, no, no, he didn't take his hand off his eyes, and Blue, with some shame, realized he was glad he didn't. He was shaking, too. Looking up (and up, and up) is Jesse Dittley, who, above the mirror, the object is looking small and toylike in his hand. He said, Didn't I tell you there was a curse? 24 Jesse heated up two bowls of spaghetti in the small kitchen, while Blue sat on a piece of old furniture that both had a chair and a chair. In this small room, he looked even more like a giant! All the furniture was baby furniture next to it. Behind him, the malevolent dark pushed through the window above the kitchen sink. Blue rejoiced in this yellow-toned oasis. He wasn't ready to drive me home this night, especially now that he's doing it alone. Noah was missing, and he wasn't sure if he was ready to show up again. The microwave beeped. Jesse explained, as he placed the bowl in front of him, that it was not really the cave that was cursed: There was something in the cave. And he's going to kill Dittleys. Blue said, and he's doing terrible things to my friend. Your dead friend Jesse remarked, sitting across from him at the tiny drop-leaf table. The mirror lay between them, face best. It's not his fault. Why didn't you tell me you could see him? I didn't say I'd see you either. But I'm not dead, Blue pointed out. BUT YOU'RE PRETTY SHORT. He let it go. He ate a Spaghetti. It wasn't good, but it was polite to eat. What's in the cave that cursed him? Sleepers, he That was in Blue's best interest. THERE ARE THINGS THAT SLEEP UNDER THE MOUNTAINS. YOU WANT TO SLEEP SOME OF THEM. I? Nodded. Why would I want that? He ate the spaghetti. Don't tell me I understand when I get older. I'm old. Have you seen your friend? It was him. That's true. With a sigh, he brought with him a large photo book - the Dittley family album. It was the kind of experience Blue always suspected would be charming and interesting, an insightful and secret peek into another family's past. That's not what this is about. It was very boring. But among the stories of birthdays that went on, as I imagine, and the fishing trips that happened as fishing trips did, another story appeared: a family living in the mouth of a cave where something slept so restlessly that they stared out at mirrors and eyes and fuzzed through loudspeakers and sometimes children tear wallpaper off their walls, or wives tear out handfuls of their own hair. This restless sleeper grew louder and louder for a generation, until finally a Dittley went into the cave and surrendered to the dark. Later, the rest of the family took out his bones and enjoyed a few more decades of peace and quiet. And a few more photos of Dittley building a car. And you're next? Blue asked. Who's going to take over after you? Son, I think so. Blue didn't mention that no one else was in the house, but he must have picked it up because he added, The wife and kids left five years ago, but they're going to get you back after the curse. He was so scared of all this, he ate all the spaghetti without thinking about it too hard. I've never met a curse. What's yours? If I kiss my true love, he'll die. Jesse nodded, as if to say, yes, it's a good one. Okay, but why don't you go? Sell this house and someone else will deal with the wallpaper and stuff? He shrugged - it was a huge shrug. THIS IS MY HOME, yes, but he could be home on the other side of henrietta, blue persevered. You can drive by this place at any time and say whoo hello house, with bleeding walls, we'll see you later! Problem solved. He took his bowl and threw it in the sink. He didn't seem offended, but he obviously disagreed with it, so he declined to comment. Also, when w - Blue started, you just have to interrupt an angry pulsing. It sounded like it was coming from everywhere. Curse? Noah? He pointed questioned at the mirror. Jesse shook his head and said, Front door. He wiped his hands with a dish towel that looked like he had to wipe something else before going to the front door. Blue heard it open and then the murmur of sounds rose and fell. Two people showed up at the kitchen door with Jesse behind them. It was Gansey and Calla. It was strange to imagine the two of them traveling anywhere together, and even stranger, embracing the minds of those standing here in the Dittley kitchen. They were very focused on Blue. Jesse showed him in a demonstrative way. See? Breaking over the threshold, Calla threw her hand out to Blue with her palms up. He spat acid. The car keys. Immediately. You don't drive that car until you're 80 and gray. Immediately. Give them to me. He was staring blue. What is that? What do you think it is? You think you're just going to leave and not call? You said no one else needed the car today! And you thought that meant you didn't have to call me? Blue wanted to be late for being a responsible man, and they had no reason to worry about his whereabouts, but then he saw Gansey's expression behind Calla. His fingers easily touched his hen and cheekbones, and his eyes looked nothing. Blue couldn't have interpreted it a few months ago, but now he knew it well enough to realize that it was a relief: the uneasy spring. He seemed genuinely sick. They were both very concerned. Half a dozen people are looking for you everywhere, and you began to assume that you died somewhere in a ditch, said Calla. Wait, what's going on? Are you looking for me? That's ten P.M, you left six hours ago, and you weren't supposed to be working, were you? We had no idea! I was this close to calling the police again. He let the re-hang meaningfully. Blue didn't look at Gansey or Jesse. I will call Ronan, said Gansey, softly, and tell him he can go back to Monmouth. Was Ronan looking for him, too? It would have been heartwarming if he'd been in any danger. I - Blue realized before he finished the sentence that there was no argument: They were right and he was wrong. Lami, he ended up like this, I didn't think anyone would notice. Car, said Calla, keys. Blue gently handed them over. Furthermore, I never want to travel in the boy's terrible car again, said Calla. You can ride back with him because I'm too angry to look at your face. I'm going to say something I'm going to regret. He started staring back, and then he stopped by Jesse's, and his nose curled up. Their arms touched him; He obviously just got a little psychometric impression... He said, Oh, it was you. He bowed his head so he could observe without malice. He treaded around the corner without further kindness or explanation. Uh, said Blue, and pushed him to his feet. I'm sorry about that. Don't mention it. Thank you for the spaghetti. So, as for the cave? YOU STILL WANT TO GO IN. After? Like you said, only Dittleys are killed by thirst. The curse just kills the Dittleys. THE CAVE CAN KILL OTHERS. I'm willing to take a chance, if you don't mind. Jesse scratched his chest again. Fair is fair, I guess. He was shaken, blue's hand had a small knife in his belt. You did a good job, ANT, he said. Gansey then entered, put his phone neatly in his pocket, and brought out his keys instead. He held up something thin in his expression. He looked like he was in the cave, his face striped and unknawn. It was so strange to see him without richard campbell gansey ill's cover in public that Blue couldn't stop staring at his face. No, it wasn't his face. This was the way he stood, shroud his shoulders, his stead ducked, his eyebrows uncertain from under his gaze. He was fine, Jesse assured him. My head knew it, Gansey said. But the rest of me doesn't. 25 I can't believe you didn't die somewhere, Ronan told Blue. You should be dead somewhere. Maybe it was a sign that Gansey was irritating the situation, that he didn't correct Ronan on this front. Thank you for your concern, he replied. The kitchen at 300 Fox Way saw him with bodies. Malory, Gansey, Ronan and Adam were at the kitchen table. Persephone hovered next to the sink. Calla leaned over the counter, wondering. Orla kept appearing at the door to steal Ronan's peek before he was shoved away. This claustrophobic, urgent night reminded Adam instead of one night, many months earlier, after Gansey broke his thumb and was nearly shot after realizing Noah was dead. Things are just starting to change. Adam discreetly checked the oven clock. Two hours late, he asked to come into the trailer factory to meet the others tonight, and he wanted to make sure he didn't pass. Blue asked: Professor Malory, would you like a tea? Page 20 Malory seemed relieved. I'd like a cup of tea. Do you like fruit or feet? He asked. If it were in the form of tea, would it be one form or another? He's considered it. Footy. Bold choice. Blue said. Someone else? He was shaken by several heads. Adam and Gansey were also victims of 300 Fox Way drinks. The teas were harvested from the yard or collected from the farmers' market, shredded and mixed by hand, then placed in bags with the prevailing ingredient or desired effect. Some of them were easier to recreationally drink than others. Calla said, I went straight to the bourbon. He and Persephone toasted. As Blue made tea and brought water to the dog, Gansey said, All right, here's the thing. We found another cave, and anecdote, someone's sleeping in it. It's time to decide what to do. There is no decision, Ronan said. Go in. You say that because you didn't see Noah today, said Blue, as he put a mug in front of Malory. This does not have a hallucinogenic effect, but you may experience euphoria. Gansey said: Nothing I've ever drunk here has ever made me experience anything close to euphoria. I never had that one, he said. Besides, Noah was a very scary thing. Jesse, the man who owns the cave, says there's a curse. He outlined the curse. Why isn't he moving? Adam asked. From his family home? Ronan asked, sounding both fucked and serious. Home is putting it heavily, Gansey said. I saw this place. You. Blue pointed it out. You're going to have to hold your back before you say something offensive. There's something else you need to know. One of the women prophesied Jesse's death earlier this year. He didn't know her, but she knew her name. Adam's head knocked him out. Not because it was shocking information, but because Blue's voice changed a little bit, and Persephone and Calla busily knocked back their drinks and suddenly didn't look at each other. Adam, a mysterious animal, is sharply at the tune of other people's secrets. So you weren't sure why anything would be secret about the death of a stranger, but you knew the Blue Sergeant was telling a partial truth. Wait, wait, Gansey said. So you're saying that this Jesse Dittley not only thinks there's a curse in this place, but he's actually right, and he's going to die. Or he's going to die for what we're doing. Blue stressed. That's why I brought it up. I feel we need to make decisions responsibly. Do you have a death list? Ronan broke in. Am I on it? Sometimes, I wish, Blue said. Can I see it? Adam asked. What's going on? Can I see the list? Blue turned away to make himself a cup of tea. I don't have it. Mom took it with her. I just remembered his name. I mean, I thought it was a girl, in the end, but the Dittley part was memorable. Calla raised sharp eyebrows, but said nothing. Adam thought somberly and suddenly with certainty. Here it is. So one of us is on it. Never mind, Gansey said. Time is going to change, and Adam's going to have to go soon. The point is, are we going into this cave tomorrow? Which one of us? Malory the farmer. Now would be the time to point out that I'm not going into any cave. I am happy to provide support from a place that the Sun can reach. Of course were going in, Ronan said. Why wouldn't we? Risk, Gansey replied. I can't stress how much I'm not willing to put anyone in danger in this room. Furthermore, rabbits, remember, have more than one sleeper, Calla pointed out. Three One is to wake up and the ztan to not wake up. And the one in the middle? Ronan asked. In his little voice, Persephone said: These things just really always sound better in threesomes. Jesse also said that some things should not be awakened, Blue added, discreetly does not allow Adam to catch his eye. So, yes, it's a risk. More than one of us? We went into the cave in Cabeswater, Ronan said. The risk was the same. Maybe worse, because we were clueless about going in. Maybe Adam thought Blue was on the list himself. Maybe that's why he hid it from them. Well, I agree with Ronan, Blue said, but I'm also biased because I want to find mom, and it's worth the risk to me. Adam thought about his conversations with Persephone. Would you have taught him if he knew he was going to die? Now he looked at her, black eyes, solid, like he challenged her to challenge secrets. There's something else we need to talk about, Gansey began, hesitant. And that's what we're going to do if it's Glendower. If there's a favor when we wake him up. I'm not sure if there's just one or more, and we need to know what we're going to say in both cases. You don't have to answer now, but think about it. There was a time when Adam thought only of the promise of this favor. But now he only has a year of school ahead of him, and he was no longer under his father's house, and even without Glendower's help, he saw a way out. All I asked him to do was get rid of Cabeswater. And he wasn't sure that's what he wanted. Gansey and Ronan mumbled about something else, Malory got in, but Adam couldn't focus on it anymore. He knew he wasn't wrong about Blue's caginess. He knew as well as he did when Cabeswater woke him up from his sleep and when he knew where to go to fix the Ley line. He knew it like the truth. He looked at his watch. When we decide, I have to go. It wasn't him. He's had some time. But it couldn't wait. The assumption grew in him. Already? Gansey asked, but not in disbelief. How rotten. Oh, it's all right. Yes, adam said. But there's this weekend, and after a lot of days off. Blue, can you help me get this thing out of the car? What kind of thing? He lied quickly and profiently. The things you wanted. I can't believe you don't remember. A, a - fabric. Persephone was still looking at him. Blue shook his head, but within himself, not at him; because of his own lack of memory. He pushed her off the counter as she punched Gansey and nodded to Malory and Ronan. During the farewell, he did everything in his power to keep himself loose, though he felt accused of the unsanctored secret. Together they headed back through the front door and down the dark walk His car was parked on the curb behind the glorious Camaro. It was quiet and cool out here, the dry leaves rattled together, as if someone were shutting up the crowd. I didn't remember, blue began, then broke off when Adam grabbed his arm and pulled him close. Which one of us, Blue? Hey, don't...! He twisted his arm, but he didn't step back. Which one of us is on that list? He looked diligently into the distance, his eyes looking at a car at a remote intersection. He didn't answer, but he didn't insult her by saying he was wrong. Blue. He didn't look at her. He went around so he wouldn't be able to look at her. He believed which one of us? His face was unknown, all the grins were tavas from him. She didn't cry. But his eyes were worse than crying. He wondered how long she'd been wearing this. His heart was shaking. You've done well. One of them was supposed to die. I don't want to die, not now- Blue. He said: You won't know it's unknown. I need to know, Adam said. Don't you understand? This will be a favor. That's what I'm going to ask for. I need to know so we can do what we ask if there's only one. He just caught his eye. Gansey, Adam said. He closed his eyes. Naturally. Of course they'll take it away from them. His mind provided the picture: Gansey twitched on the ground, covered in blood. Ronan crumpled next to him in mourning. It's been months since Cabeswater showed him the vision, but he hasn't forgotten. He also didn't forget that in the vision it was Adam's fault. His heart was a grave. If it's your fault, Adam thought you could stop him. 26 Blue woke up angry. He couldn't remember what he dreamed, only that it was about his mother, and when he woke up, he hit something. He remembered when he visited Adam one afternoon that summer and he kicked a box - that was how angry he was. It just didn't seem worth kicking anything when there was no one around to see him do it. He lay there and told himself to go back to sleep, but instead, he got angrier. He had enough of Persephone, Calla and his mother with holding back information because Blue wasn't a psychic. That he couldn't dream of fancy colleges because he wasn't rich. That they couldn't hold Gansey's hand because they couldn't hurt Adam's feelings and they couldn't kiss Gansey's mouth because he didn't want to kill her. He was tired of know he was going to die, and he was afraid his mother would die, too. Over and over again, he heard Adam figure out the truth: Gansey. He threw down his blanket and dressed angrily and stormed into the phone room angrily. Orla sat there and painted her nails at 1:00 a.m. Blue froze at the door, written with intent on his face. What's going on? Orla Come on, let's go. Blue didn't move. Oh, please. I'm not going to stop you. I was just trying to stop you from breaking your heart, but whatever, go and do it, Orla said. Blue stepped across the room and picked up the phone and looked suspiciously at Orlaba again. His cousin returned to paint tiny mandalas on his nails. He didn't pretend not to listen, but otherwise he seemed carefree. Blue called Gansey. He picked it up right away. I didn't sleep. I know, he replied. Come and get me. There was something unknown about him when he arrived at the Pig. Something wild with his eyes, some bite in his faint smile. Something completely hectic and restless. He smiled on the ledge and looked at the edge. This wasn't the Gansey you saw in the kitchen earlier. That was the Gansey he secretly called last night. He didn't ask where he wanted to go. You can't talk about it, so they didn't say anything. The Camaro roamed the quiet late-night street. He climbed in and slammed the door. Gansey - heedless, wild Gansey - was deered by another outfit as soon as they were out in the area. He sent the car from the red light to the traffic light, and when he got to the empty highway, he let the car frantically climb up to speed and hand it over with a fist in gearbox. They were heading east, towards the mountains. Blue turned on the radio and had fun with Gansey's music until he found something worth playing out loud. Then he wrestled down the window, so that the air was screaming at him. It was too cold for that, but Gansey reached into the back seat without taking his eyes off the road and pulling his coat forward. He put it on, trembling, when the silk lining cooled his bare legs. The collar reeked of it. They didn't talk. The radio tripped and waltzed. The car was screaming. The wind was blowing in the booth. Blue put his hand on top of Gansey and held it with white. There was no other soul on the road but them. They drove to the mountains - up, up, and across the pass. The peaks were black and forbidden in the dim light of the headlights, and when they reached the highest point of the pass, Gansey's fingers tightened under his as he shifted downwards and squeezed the car around a U-turn as they came. They scoigled back to Henrietta, next to the eerily empty shops, next to the quiet houses, just outside Aglyonby, just outside downtown, next to Henrietta. On the other side of town, he slid to a corner to the new disused bypass: four untouched street roads from scratch to nowhere. He stopped here, took his coat from her, and they switched places. He slid the seat as close to the wheel as he went and stopped the car and stopped it again. His hands on his knees, his fingers on the skin, the lifeline touching the bone, and Him is letting the clutch out too fast. The engine was spind, strong and sure, and the car jumped forward. They didn't talk. The street lights streaked through the windshield as he made a pass up one side of the road, then turned around and went the other way, over and over again. The car was awesome and willing - too much, too fast, everything at once. The gearbox collided with his fist when they were still there, and the accelerator pedal got stuck and then surged as they moved. Cool air with an under-dash opening whispered night air over his bare feet; the heat from the booming engine burned the top of his feet. The sound: The sound alone was a monster amplified when it felt the gearbox vibrate, twitching at the steering wheel, roaring over its legs. Page 21 was afraid of him until he hit me, and then his heart beat too hard to remember fear. The Camaro was like Gansey tonight: awesome and exciting, willing to do whatever he asks. With every turn, it was bolder. For all the noise and posturing, the Pig was a generous teacher. He didn't mind that Blue was a very short girl who had never driven a stick before. He did what he could. He couldn't forget Gansey's hand on his knee. He pulled over. He thought it was so easy to avoid kissing someone when he was with Adam. His body never knew what to do. Now he knew. His mouth didn't care if he was cursed. He turned to Gansey. Blue, he warned, but his voice was chaotic. So close, his throat sniffed mint and wool sweater and vinyl car seats, and Gansey, just Gansey. He said, I just want to pretend... I want to pretend I am. Exhaled. What was that kiss without a kiss? It was a tabcloth that was dragged out during a party. Everything's messed up against everything else, just a few chaotic moments. Fingers on the hair, hands cupping neck, mouth pulled on the face and jaw in dangerous proximity. They stopped, the noses against each other, in the strange way that proximity required. He could feel his breath in his mouth. Maybe it wouldn't hurt if I kissed you, he whispered. Maybe only if you kiss me. They were both swallowed at the same time, and the spell was broken. They both laughed, again at the same time, shaking. And then we'd never talk about it again, Gansey said, mocking himself softly, and Blue was so pleased with him because he played the words that night over and over in his head and wanted to know that he could. Carefully she tucked her hair behind her ear - it was a fool's errand because she was never behind her ears to start and not stay. But he did it over and over again, and then he pulled out two mints, one in his mouth and one in his. He couldn't tell if it was very late or very

with another person when I'm with him. He's not taking it away from me. It's a little louder now, but it's not much. Blue had only a very limited understanding of what mercurial meant and that limited understanding was a very bad time trying to apply it to Gansey. He said, How was it back then? It was a wonderful time, Malory replied. Then, after a pause, he added: Except when they weren't. It was smaller then. As he said, smaller made it seem like he wasn't talking about height, and Blue thought he knew what he meant. Malory continued: He was still trying to prove that he wasn't just hallucinating. He was still pretty obsessed with the event itself. Looks like he's outgrown himself, lucky for him. The event - the stabbing? I mean, death? Yes, Jane, death. He was always puzzled. He always drew bees and wasps and stuff. I have screaming nightmares on it – I had to take my own place because I couldn't sleep with him as you might imagine. Sometimes these seizures happen during the day. We were just driving on a riding trail in Leicestershire, and the next thing I know, he's going to be on the ground scratching his face like a lunatic. But I let him be, and he ran his own way, and it was fine, like nothing happened. How awful, whispered Blue. He imagined Gansey learning to throw up his smile on his real face. He recalled in shame that he once wondered what a boy like him would have been, a boy who had everything. such a skill. How unfair it was to assume that love and money would rule out pain and hardship. He thought they disagreed with some guilt in the car the night before. Malory didn't hear him. Such a researcher, though. What a sharp nose for hidden things. You can't train this! You have to be born with it. He heard Gansey's voice in the cave, empty and afraid: Wasp. He was shaking. Of course, you just left one day, Malory masturbated. What's going on? Blue suddenly concentrated. I shouldn't have been surprised, said the professor in a saying voice. I knew he was a great traveler. But we weren't really done with the research, I thought. We had a little up and down and patched it up. But then one morning, he disappeared. Get out of here? The dog climbed on Malory's chest, and now he's licked his jaw. Malory didn't push him away. Oh, he's gone. His things, his bags. He left behind a lot of things he didn't need. But he never came back. It took him months to call me again, like nothing had happened. It was hard to imagine Gansey leaving anything like this. There were things around him that he clung to wildly. He didn't leave a message or anything? He just left, Malory said. After that, his family sometimes called me to find out where he was going. Your family? He felt like he was telling a story about another person. Yes, of course I told them what I knew. But I didn't really know. It was Mexico before he came to me, and then after Iceland, I think, before the States. I doubt I still know half of it. He pulled himself together and moved so easily, so fast. He'd done it so many times before England, Jane, and that was his old hat. Previous conversations have slowly rearranged Blue's mind and made new sense like them. He recalled one of the nights he spent on the side of a mountain and looked down at Henrietta like a fairy village. At home, he said it was like he was in pain. It's like he didn't believe it. It wasn't exactly what Malory said, and he had a run-in with the Gansey he knew. Rather, the Gansey you saw was just a partial truth. It was cowardice and stupidity, Gansey said at the door. He leaned on the door way, with his hands stretching into pockets, as he often did. I didn't like the send-off, so I abstained and didn't think about the consequences. Blue and Malory took a look at him. It was impossible to say how long he'd been standing there. It is very kind of you, he continued, not to say anything to me about it. That's more than I deserved. But know that I regret it very much. Well, said Malory. He was very uncomfortable. The dog looked away. Well, it's my fault. What's the verdict on your anaster? Gansey put a mint in his mouth; it was impossible not to think the night before, He put one in his. He's staying here for now. That wasn't me, that was Persephone. I offered to fix the first floor of Monmouth. This may still be the end of it. Who is this? Blue asked. He tried the name Gwenllian. He didn't say it was better – the double lls didn't say anything like they looked. Glendower had ten children with his wife Margaret. And at least four ... not with him. Gansey said this part with antins; it was clear he didn't find this appropriate for his hero. Gwenllian is one of four illegitimate ones. It's a patriotic name. There were also two other very famous Gwenllians who were associated with Welsh freedom. There was something else he wanted to tell me, but he didn't. It meant unpleasant or ugly, Blue said, Spit it out, Gansey. What's good? He said: As he was buried - on the tomb door was Glendower, and also the lid of the coffin. It's not a picture of him. We can ask him, although getting real information from him is something, but it seems to me that he was buried in a shillssala. What's that there? Sometimes when you have a very rich grave or a very important one, you can put a double grave somewhere nearby, but it is easier to find that grave robbers something to find. Blue was scandalous. Your own daughter? It's illegal, Gansey said, but he was unhappy like him. As punishment for something. It's all so tacky. I'm starving to death. Where did Par – Adam and Ronan go? To get supplies for Gwenllian. He looked at his huge and handsome watch with a huge and puzzled frown. It's been a while? He made a face. Ish? What do we do now? Gansey asked. From the other room Calla exclaimed: GO BUY US PIZZA. EXTRA CHEESE, RICHIE RICH. Blue said, I think he's starting to like you. 31 Ronan went back to St. Agnes. Adam thought he wanted to go to Adam's apartment above the church's scare, but when they got out on the street, Ronan strayed and headed to the main entrance to the temple. Even though Adam lived above the church, he hasn't been in it since he moved into his apartment. The Parrishes were never templegoers, and although Adam himself suspected that God existed, he also suspected that it didn't matter. Lynch, he said, as Ronan opened the door to the dark sanctuary. I thought we were going to talk. Ronan dipped his fingers in the holy water and touched his forehead. Empty. But the church didn't feel empty. He was claustrophobic with the smell of frankincense, the vases of foreign lilies, the white cloth, the broken gaze of the sad Christ. He bled with stories that Adam didn't know, rituals he would never have done, relationships he never shared. The humming history was dense, which you feel dizzy. Ronan hit Adam's arm with the palm of his hand. Oh, come on. He walked down the back of the obscure church and opened the door to a steep staircase. On top, Adam found himself on a hidden balcony inhabited by two benches and a pipe organ. A statue of Mary - probably Mary? - he reached out, but only because he didn't know her. And then again, he bought Ronan, and he probably knew her. Some little candles burned at his feet. The choir sits here, ronan said, sitting on the organ. Without warning, he played a terrifyingly loud and startlingly sonorous fragment. Ronan! Scolded Adam. He looked at Mary, but he didn't mind. I told you, no. There's no one here. When Ronan saw that Adam still did not believe, he explained: This is confession day in Woodville and they share our priest. That's when Matthew used to take his organ lessons because no one would be around to care how bad it was sucked. Adam finally sat on one of the benches. His face pressed against his smooth back, he looked at Ronan. Oddly enough, Ronan belonged here, just like he did at barns. This noisy, lush religion created him as well as the world of his father's dreams; it seemed impossible for all Ronan to exist in one person. Adam began to realize that he didn't know Ronan at all. Or rather, he knew part of it and assumed it was all his business. Cabeswater's scent, after every tree rain, drifted past Adam, and he realized that while he was watching Ronan, Ronan was looking at him. So, Greenmantle, he said, and Ronan looked away. Fuck it. Yes, that's it. I looked into all the public stuff the first night. It would have been easy for Ronan, too, but maybe he knew Adam wanted the puzzle that occupied the mind. Double PhD, home in Boston, three speeding tickets in the last 18 months, blah, blah, blah. What about the cobweb thing? It doesn't matter, Adam replied. It took him just some time to see the easily available version of Colin Greenmantle's life story. And just a little more time to realize that it's not really the life story he needed. You didn't have to undo the Internet— you probably couldn't undo the Internet. He had to turn a new net. Of course it matters. That's all that matters. No, Ronan, look- come here. Adam began writing in the dust next to the bench. Ronan joined him and squatting and read it. What's that there? The things we would put in their place, said Adam. He worked it all out in his head. Although it would have been easier to describe, he would have thought better. It's better not to have a paper trail or an electronic record. Only Cabeswater was able to hack into Adam's mind records. This is all the evidence. we have to dream and how to bury them. Some things literally had to be buried. The plan was orderly in the concept, but not in the execution; it was dirty to frame someone, and the murders required bodies. Or at least body parts. It looks like a lot, Adam admitted, because he didn't, he once described it all in the dust. I think that's kind of it. But these are mostly small things. Ronan finished reading Adam's plan. His face turned a little away from the horror, just as he turned his face away from his dream object. He said: But - it's not what happened. That's not what Greenmantle did. Ronan shouldn't have said it: it's a lie. Adam should have known this was a problem for him. He had a hard time explaining it. I know it's not. But it's too hard to frame him for killing your father. It's too good, and there's too many pieces in it I don't know. You can disprove one of our pieces with a real play, or something real, like the real timeline you actually did, you can ruin something we're going to come up with. But if I invent the crime, I can control all the pieces. Page 26 Ronan just stared at him. Look, and it has to be something really terrible, something you don't want to go to jail for, Adam said. Now he felt a little dirty; He couldn't say whether Ronan's apparent ren against him only stemmed from the nature of adam's proposed crime or whether Adam was even able to think of such a crime. But he persisted because it was too late to withdraw. We want to be too threatened to even think about opening your mouth or against it. If he was accused of this, he'd be ruined, and he knows it. And if he does get caught, those who commit crimes against children will be mistreary in prison, and he'll know it. Adam saw ronan's two sides at war. Incredibly, I saw that lying was going to lose. Just once, Adam said quickly. Just this once. I could do it again to be your father, but it wouldn't be that bulletproof. And then you'll have to deal with court cases. So is Matthew. He felt bad about the last part, even if it was true. Because he knew it was going to deer Ronan, and he did. Okay, Ronan said unhappily. He looked at the plan written in the dust, and his eyebrows frowned. Gansey would hate that. Because it was the worst kind of filth. Kings shouldn't have dragged their hems into it. That's why we won't tell him. He expected Ronan to back down, too, but he just nodded. They agreed on two things: protecting Gansey's collapsing feelings and lying by omission. Do you think you can do this? Adam asked. That's a lot of specifics. It was supposed to be impossible. No one should have dreamed of these things, much less. These. But Adam saw what Ronan could do. He read the dream will and rode in the dreamlike Camaro and was terrified of dreamlike night terror. It's possible there were two gods in this temple. Ronan squatted at the bench again, studying the list, and his fingers running over his head as he thought. When he didn't want to look like an ass** down, his face looked very different, and in a tipping moment Adam felt the appalling inequality of their relationship; Ronan knew Adam, but Adam wasn't sure if he knew Ronan. I'll do it now,' Ronan said eventually. Now? Adam asked in disbelief. Here? Now? Ronan flashed a cocky grin, glad he got the reaction. There's no better time than the present, Parrish. Now. Everything except the phone. I need to see what kind of man you have before I can dream about him. Adam looked around the quiet church. I still felt so inhabited. Even though he intellectually believed Ronan that the Church would remain empty, in his heart he felt that ... Options. But Ronan's face left him challenged, and Adam didn't back down. He said, I know what kind of phone you have. It's not enough to tell a model. I need to see it, Ronan replied. Adam hesitated, then asked, What if I asked Cabeswater to show me his phone in his sleep? I know what kind that is. He waited for Ronan to stumble or wonder about Adam's weirdness, but Ronan just straightened up and rubbed his hands together. Yes, it's good. Good. Look, maybe you should go. To the apartment, and I'll see you when I'm done. Why? Ronan said: Not everything in my head is a big deal, Parrish, believe it or not. I told you. And when I bring something back from a dream, sometimes I can't bring back just one thing. I'll take my chances. At least give me some space. Adam retreated to sit next to Mary as Ronan stretched out the bench and rubbed out the dingy plan with his jeans' feet. Something about his silence in pee and the glee of the light reminded Adam of Glendower's image, seen at the grave. He's a king, he's asleep. Adam couldn't imagine if Ronan could rule. Don't listen to me, Ronan said, though his eyes were closed. Anyway, whatever. I'll ask Cabeswater for the phone. I'll see you on the other side. As Ronan was nervous, Adam flicked his eyes to the candles at Mary's feet. It was harder to look into a flame than a black water pool, but it served the same purpose. As his vision turned white, he felt his mind loosen and detach from his body, and before he fell out, he asked Cabeswater to give Ronan the phone. Asking questions wasn't the right word. The presentation was better because it showed Cabeswater what he needed: a picture of the phone showing itself as Ronan. Time it's impossible to judge when she cries. Nearby - what was nearby? - he heard a sharp sound like a caw, and suddenly realized that he wasn't sure if he was staring into the light for a minute, an hour or a day. His own body felt like a flame, flickering and fragile; It's gone too deep. It's time to go back. He ran back, pulled back into his bones. He felt the moment when his mind pushed me back to his body. His eyes opened. Ronan twitched in front of him. Adam yanked his feet toward his body, locked away from the disaster just in front of him. Ronan's arms were covered in blood, and his hands were visceral, juicy wounds. His jeans were soaked in black. The carpet of the church sparkled with it. But the horror was his spine, and he leaned back on himself. It was his hand, pressed against his throat. It was his breath - the gasp, the gasp, the choked-off word. His fingers trembled as he held them to his mouth. It was his eyes, too wide-open, too bright, thrown at the ceiling. All I see is pain. Adam didn't want to move. He couldn't move. He couldn't do it. That didn't happen. But he was, and he could. He's moving forward. Ronan - Oh, my God. Because now that he was closer, he saw what it was like to destroy Ronan's body. Unrecoverable. He was dying. I did this - it was my idea - he didn't really want to - Are you happy now? Ronan asked. Is that what you wanted? Adam started violently. The sound came from somewhere else. He looked up and found Ronan sitting cross-legged on the bench above them, his expression alert. One of this Ronan's hands was bloody, but obviously it wasn't his own blood. Something dark blinked on his face as he cast his eyes off his dying dopple. The other Ronan was whining. It was a hideous sound. What's happening? Adam asked. Dizzy. He was awake; He was dreaming. You said you wanted to stay and watch, ronan chanted from the bench. Enjoy the show. Adam understood. The real Ronan did not move; He woke up right where he fell asleep. This dying Ronan was a copy. He wanted his brain to believe that this agonizing Ronan didn't exist, but the parallelism was too perfect. He saw a Ronan Lynch violently dying and a Ronan Lynch watching his cool removal. Both were true, although both should have been impossible. I tried too much at once,' Ronan said on the bench. His words were short, cut off. He tried not to look like he cared about seeing himself die. Maybe not. Maybe that's what's always happened. How foolish of Adam to think he knew anything about Ronan Lynch. It's not the kind of thing - it's the kind of thing I usually dream about and everything is excited about. The horrors of the night came. Then wasps. Me too I'd bring them with me. That I'm going to wake up like this. So I dreamed of another one for me that I have, and then - I woke up. And here I am. And here I am again. What a good trick. What a cool trick. The other Ronan was dead. Adam felt the same way he felt when he saw the dream world. Reality is wrapped in you. Ronan was here, dead, and offended because there was Ronan, alive and blinking. Here, said Ronan. Here's your shit. The lies you wanted. He's got a convex, oversized manila cover on Adam, full, presumably, of evidence to frame Greenmantle. It took Adam too long to realize that Ronan wanted him to marry her, then a second longer to take his mind to mechanics to take it. Adam told his hand to stretch it out, and reluctantly. Get your ass together, Adam. There was blood on the envelope, and now it's on Adam's hand. He said, Did you get everything? It's all there. What an impossible, wonderful and hideous thing it was. An ugly plan that an ugly boy planned has now come to an ugly life. From dream to reality. How appropriate it was that Ronan, left to his own devices, manifested beautiful cars and beautiful birds and gentle brothers, while Adam, when given power, manifested a sordid series of perverted murders. Adam asked: Now? What to do with ... Nothing, grumbled Ronan. You're not doing anything. No, you're doing what I asked you to do. Go. What's going on? Ronan was shaking. It's not the poison, like the other Ronan, it's some chained emotion. I said I didn't want you here if that happened, and now it's happened, and look at you. Adam thought he took it pretty well, considering. Gansey would have fainted by this time. He didn't see how his presence made things worse. He saw, however, that Ronan Lynch was angry because he wanted to be angry. So it should be an ass**down. It wasn't my fault. I didn't say it was your fault, Ronan said. I told you to get away from me. The two boys were staring at each other. Insanely, I felt like every other argument I've ever had, although this time I had a Ronan-shaped body wavy between them covered with gore. Ronan just wanted to yell where someone could hear him. Adam felt it was because of his temper, not because he thought Ronan was mad at him, but because he was sick of Ronan thinking it was the only way to show that he was upset. He said, Oh, come on. What's going to happen now? Ronan said, Oh. That's what. Anyway, Adam said, head for the stairs. Next time, you'll die alone. 32 Back in the apartment, Adam stood in the shower for a very long time. For once, the part of his brain that calculated how much a long, hot shower could cost was silent. He was standing in the water. it's lukewarm. After getting out and getting dressed, he belatedly remembered that Ronan might have been upset by the dream itself, not the way he watched her die. He fell asleep to get proof of the murder and woke up with blood on his hands. Adam knew that the horrors of the night only came to Ronan when he had a nightmare. Ronan must have known what was in store for him, but he volunteered when Adam asked. Maybe Adam should see if he's okay. I'm sure he'll still be there. But Adam stayed where he was, thinking about the other Ronan. The dead one. The strangest thing was that the moment was Adam's vision of the tree in Cabeswater, but it turned out. Gansey's not dying, Ronan is. So the vision was wrong? Have you changed your future yet? Or was there anything else? There was a knock on the apartment door. Probably Ronan. Although unusually, he wouldn't testify to it if he were the first to admit wrongdoing. The knock came again, more persistent. Adam checked to make sure his hands weren't bloody anymore, and then he opened the door. It was his father. He opened the door. It was his father. He opened the door. It was his father. Aren't you going to ask me to come in? His father asked. Adam's body wasn't his, so out of astonishment, he watched him step back to get Robert Parrish into his apartment. How narrow-shouldered he was next to the other man. It was hard to see where it came from without a closer look at their faces. Then you could see that Robert Parrish was wearing Adam's thin, delicate lips. Then it was not difficult to see the same beautiful hair, braided from dust, and the wrinkle between the eyebrows, formed by caution. In fact, it wasn't hard to see one bee for the other at all. Adam couldn't remember what he meant before he opened the door. So that's where you keep yourself, said Robert Parrish. He looked into the rooter's shelf, the makeshift bedside table, the mattress on the floor. Adam got out of the way. 'It looks like we're about to have a date,' her father added. He stopped to stand right in front of Adam. Are you going to look me in the face when I'm talking to you, or are you going to keep looking at that shelf? Adam wanted to keep looking at that shelf. Okay, then. Look, I know there's been a few words, but I think you might as well call this whole thing off. Your mother's very upset, and she's going to be pretty ridiculous that day. Adam was sure his father couldn't be here. He couldn't remember everything that happened after he filed charges, but he thought it was a temporary restraining order. At the time, he thought he remembered finding it reassuring, a memory that now seemed foolish. His father beat him for years. To get caught, and a punch was a bigger act than trespassing. Of course, then you can call the police and report a violation of your father; He wasn't sure if his father would be punished, but Adam's adult side thought it seemed like a good thing to put him on the record. All this, however, came after these minutes, which he still had to go through. Through.

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