

Chapter One



“As pants the hart for cooling springs
When heated in the chase . . .”

“Martyrdom” (orig. “Fenwick” or “Drumclog”), #450, Episcopal
Hymnal, 1940

Tune: Hugh Wilson, c. 1800, harmony by Robert A. Smith, 1825

Text: Tate and Brady, 1696, based on Psalm 42

The snows are not eternal, but she is. Snows are driven, she is not. She drags through the landscape inside out: not a pretty sight. She is given to sighs that rival winds and winds that rival the roar of the blow down, bursting rages that hurl crashing like water down a flume. She is rain and wind together, blessed by neither. She does not walk; she rumbles along like a storm. Overhead a raven calls. Together they are the stuff of legend. Animals follow her. She smells of them. People say she talks to them.

A slow-moving part of the landscape of trees and hills, she is brown and gray like a slow-rolling glacial erratic. She is layered and sturdy as corn husks but part feather, part fur, part skin and horn. The only incongruous part of her, the part that identifies her as more human than elemental yet nonetheless elemental, is a pair of snowshoes. Older than she, they are as venerable as the landscape—ash, willow and the tendons of a long-fallen creature. The bindings are kept loose by rubbings of mink oil, replaced here and there by new joins fashioned of wood, cloth, twine, wire and duct tape.

When the snow melts, she sheds layers of felt and wool, fleece and leather. But she is thick today with the fat of clothes like blubber on a whale. Underneath she is quite lean, though pained and achy. Her body, though not young, is taut, wiry, strong and stubborn. Outside it can be thirty below, but inside her tent of clothing she is just breaking a sweat. Her face is covered but her eyes show. They are balsam green and keen as the needles of the white pine. She is pausing, mid-rumble, to look both at the sky and at the landscape. There at the crest of an escarpment where a large open meadow meets the woods, there's a kettle pond of good size. Two sturdy birches and a scrub of alder and witch hazel line one side, but the bushes are so covered with snow they form little mounds of six or seven feet in mockery of the mountains to the east and south—the High Peaks of the Adirondacks.

She trudges to the clumps of alder and snow where like a badger she has hollowed out a temporary shelter. Around her chest—the barrel of fabric and fur—is a rope. Behind her the rope pulls taut to an ancient ten-seat toboggan with a pile of something under a tarp; behind that, at a respectful distance, are twelve deer. From her hands she pulls off the outer layer of boiled wool, matted felt, and leather mittens: great paws carefully batted, stitched, and mended. Underneath that are wool gloves and underneath those are dainty silk liners. She leaves the silk and wool on. She turns slowly so as not to startle her gathering herd, unleashes herself from the rope, and begins to loose the oiled canvas tarp from the toboggan. From some deep recess in the folds of clothing she pulls a pair of sturdy wire cutters and snips the baling wire around three bales of hay. Huffing and puffing, she rolls each one off the toboggan. Then she pulls the toboggan along toward her shelter to let the deer come forward and feed.

She carries a pack basket, and from its black ash depths she draws out a thermos packed in batting and an insulated bag with some nuts, chocolate and raisins, and several slices of buttered toast. She sits on a snow-covered rock beside the pond with the pack basket and thermos. The clip-on thermometer on the basket shows twenty-eight degrees below zero. The sun has risen and is warming things up a bit. It will soon be between minus ten and zero as the sun climbs the peaks in the east over Lake Placid and Saranac Lake, fifty miles away. It's seven o'clock on Sunday morning, February second, Groundhog Day and Candlemas.

She sniffs the heat of the tea from the thermos and deems it too hot to swill from the lip. She pours a bit into the metal cup top, wrapping her woolly hands about the cup and waiting a few seconds only. It will chill too soon and then freeze. She sips eagerly until the cup is drained, but already it is cold.

The deer are dainty in their approach to the hay—early July hay cut from this very field on a sunny, warm day full of brass bees and sunbeams. It was a day she remembers now as being one of the few, the last, when she had known a tiny, vestigial moment of peace and contentment, the beginnings of some stirring of a whole, new self. That was all to change with the seasons, the currents of the mountain streams, the movement of fish and deer, and the infernal intrusion of people. The dry, biting cold has replaced the warm sun. Now there is steam from all breath. The vapor drifts a few inches and seems to shatter in the cold and drop. The air is too dry to sustain moisture of any kind. The snow aches and squeals. Only the path she walks with the toboggan is packed enough for somewhat easy passage, at least until the next snowfall. It's only February.

She opens the bag of nuts and chocolate bits and tips it into her mouth, uncovered briefly to allow the passage of food and tea, then rapidly recovered. All these years she's never been frostbitten. Never. It's a matter of care.

Glad to rest and catch her breath, she now needs to move and soon, so she stands outside the snow shelter. But she picks up a noise in the distance. She looks west and sees them—high and silver in formation, fast, loud and furious. The deer, too, hear the noise and quiver, but the pull of the hay is too strong for the moment. The jets turn north. Good, she thinks, they're heading toward the border, possibly patrolling. But they bank in a circle, turn east and south.

They are coming so fast she is startled. Three of them, still at cloud level; but they are dropping and directly overhead in a short breath. One peels away, heads west, then north, then east and then south in a tight sinking circle. She doesn't like this. The jet is too low, a threat. The deer bolt toward the woods at the far edge of the field, away from the noise of the jets. She reaches under the tarp and pulls out an old rifle—a single shot over-and-under with .16 gauge on top and a .22 on the bottom. She snaps off the safety. The deer are in full panic now and stampede into the woods. She waves the rifle at the jet far above her.

“God dammit!” She stands and fires randomly just as the jet roars overhead too far, too fast. Her ears ring and the air pressure pounds waves around her. The jet banks again and circles. She has already reloaded. Once again, she aims and fires, reloads. One glove is gripped hard between her teeth. The jet comes back a third time, the other two following. She fires again, ducks back into her shelter under the alders. The noise is fearsome. “Shit!” She covers her ears. “Shit!”

She stays put for thirty minutes, her back and knees aching like crazy and her heart going into its jazzy double backbeat. The jets are gone. Will they come back? In her mind she plays out the old scenario—the press, the microphones. She sees explosions of flashbulbs again, and everyone hollering.

“Shit.”

She grabs her pack basket, her ruined breakfast, and hastily retreats back along the path she came. She’ll come back later for the toboggan. The raven, she notices, has disappeared along with the deer.



Jim Porter, ranger and guide, gets up late as usual of a Sunday when he’s not on call or ushering at the Methodist church. He was awakened earlier by the sound of jets flying overhead, too low again, he thought; but he rolled over and went back to sleep. About ten-thirty he gets up, pulls his pants over his long, lean legs, a turtleneck and a wool sweater over his head, and walks into the kitchen to stoke the wood stove. He makes his coffee in the automatic outfit Eleanor Winslow Livingston gave him a bunch of Christmases ago. He breaks two eggs in a pan and starts four strips of bacon between two paper towels for two minutes, in the microwave oven Eleanor gave him the Christmas before that.

Jim’s tidy little cedar-shingled house, formerly his parents’ house, sits just off the main highway into Winslow Station. The old place consists of an upstairs and down, the upstairs mainly a loft-like room with a dormer window, but he shuts that off, seals it up tight to conserve heat in the winter. The only time the upstairs is open is in July and August, when he needs the air circulation, or when he has the company of stranded hikers or flatlanders he’s agreed to take out fishing.

Jim has North Country Public Radio on, waiting for the twelve o’clock news when the phone rings. “M’lo? Yeah? Yeah? No shit. Where

was this at? Oh Jeez. Yeah, I know who it is. You bet I do. That's private land, you know—Winslow's. Yeah? Sure. S'not a problem. I mean, she's no threat to anybody. Well yeah, those flyovers piss everybody off. I heard 'em this mornin' yet. They piss me off, too. Whaddya want me to do, go up and have a word? Sure. No need to do that. No I mean it. She's been up there a long time, you know, maybe twelve years. She's been good lately, but she does have a temper on her like a bull moose. She's Eleanor Winslow's, I mean, Missus Livingston's, well you know, old friends and so forth. Yeah, that's the one, but you don't dare call her that to her face. Yessir, I understand. I'll be happy to talk to her. No I ain't gonna take her gun away from her. I know that old gun. For God's sake, she's a good shot but she ain't that good of a shot and it ain't that good of a gun. I can't believe she hit the damn Warthog, and I don't know what they're gettin' so riled up about. She's almost as old as I am and I'm fifty-two. She ain't no terrorist, if that's what they're thinkin'. Any damage? Yeah. Don't sound too bad. Yeah, sure. I'll go up and talk to her. You know me. Don't worry; I'll take care of it. I'll call Eleanor, too. Yeah, see ya. I'll call when I've been up there, but I'm havin' my coffee now and God dammit, it's gettin' cold."

Jim hangs up and rubs his cheeks and chin with both hands. How he hates having to shave on a free Sunday, but he's got to if he's going up to check on Lily. He sighs with a great exhalation of many, many years of Lily. A lot of time wasted, a lot of time crazy, a lot of time sad, and just when things are getting serious with this nice woman he's been seeing down to Paul Smiths, here comes Lily again to mess it all up in his mind. Jim shakes his head, sighs again, sits down with his coffee, and picks up the phone.



The fire crackles in the living room fireplace on East 86th Street. A stack of unread *Wall Street Journals*, *New Yorkers*, and *New York Times Sunday Magazines* are gathered at the side of Eleanor Winslow Livingston, still in her church clothes. Colin, her husband, has brought in tea and her favorite almond scones fresh out of the oven, placed on the butler's table between them. Aside from having to glance at some papers she's brought back from the Nairobi AIDS conference, Eleanor is looking forward to a day of rare leisure with her husband. Every time she comes back

from a trip abroad, she looks in the mirror, sees the changes in her face—a bit more wrinkle here, a sag of chin there, more white than the former classic, past-shoulder blond hair inherited from her mother, an aristocratic English beauty. There's a bit of a stoop of the shoulders in the tall frame bequeathed her by her handsome father. And Colin—she sees him aging, too, and worries for both of them. He's changed into his loose trousers and an Irish flannel grandfather's shirt—a far cry from the trim young man in starched bib and tucker she met at a ball in New York twenty-seven years ago. He only lacks a monocle to set off his ruddy cheeks, Brit complexion. If she were casting *The Scarlet Pimpernel* for the screen, she would choose him over Leslie Howard. He'd be an admirable Lord Peter Wimsey, too. He was the only man of her own age back then who could match her in stature, and yet be so different in temperament. He is the serene yet elegant domestic male with a penchant for cooking exquisite food and taking her to the opera and ballet. He reads constantly, travels little, loves New York second only to her. He sits across from her on the overstuffed sofa covered in rose red brushed cotton. Colin has today's *Times*, picked up as usual on their walk home from St. Bart's on this bright, chilly Candlemas Day. He methodically separates the sections of newspaper on his lap and discards the advertisements, real estate and sports sections, and settles back against the bolster to read the news.

Eleanor, still a little jet-lagged, has kicked off her shoes and stretched out her long legs on the ottoman. She takes a sip of tea and a bit of scone, tasting both as appreciatively as the Eucharist this morning, glad to be home with a relatively free week ahead, except for a debriefing at the UN on her discussions with the doctors she met in Nairobi. In her mind, the Anglican Rite One post-Communion prayer plays again: “. . . and so to assist us with Thy grace to do all such good works as Thou hast prepared for us to walk in.” The odd phraseology makes her wonder what kinds of works are possible to walk in—like a brewery or a steel mill full of large, loud machinery? She remembers walking through the “Upper Works” at Tahawus, the MacIntyre iron foundry way up in the Adirondacks, where nothing was left but the huge old stone furnace, silent since the 1830s but such a strong testimony to man and Nature. The forests they cut down more than two hundred years ago have all grown back, cooling the stones that once burned so hot when smelting the iron ore dug from the surrounding denuded hills.

“I have wandered enough in the works,” she thinks. Now the present fire, the communion tea and scones with Colin bring a feeling of immense contentment and relief. These are the last days before she retires from all those works. Only two more weeks, then no more long trips, no more jet lag, conferences, terrorism worries. No more orphanages or hospices full of sick men, women and children. She has seen, heard enough to grieve for the world for the rest of her life. She will in good conscience pass on the mantle to her younger associates in Anglican Relief. Two more weeks.

“I think more and more of someplace warm with a nice beach. You know—eco-touristy. I’d like to snorkel,” she says to her husband.

“All right,” replies Colin, and he tosses her the travel section. “I’m for that.”

“I can stand just two more weeks of meetings, if I can have a month of turquoise blue waters full of jewelery fish, a white sand beach and a pile of good books. Everybody else leaves the city in the winter. Marbella, Côte d’Azur.”

“But no theater,” he cautions. “No opera. No dance.”

“One month, no more, no less. When was the last time you and I had a full month free and clear, just the two of us?”

“You’ll get antsy.”

“Try me.”

“Your restless legs,” he says, waving a hand at her feet, which are wagging as usual.

“I know,” she says, willing her feet to stop, stretching them out before her—long, strong legs still. “I see them growing fins. I’d like to study marine biology . . . or something.”

“More tea?” Colin asks.

“Please. And thank you. The scones are delicious.”

“You’re welcome. No scones either. Not like these,” he states emphatically. “Not in the Caribbean.”

“I can’t imagine what life will be like for us, can you?”

“You mean on beaches and things?”

Eleanor takes a bite of scone and mumbles through the crumbs. “More than that. I don’t know. Self-indulgence, sybaritism.”

“For once in your life.”

“Maybe if I found something local and light—with an *i-t-e*. Literacy volunteers, perhaps.”

“Here we go. Less than one minute ago you were snorkeling. Now you have a future of yet more taking charge before the local library or whoever knows what’s happening to them. Let it go, Ellie, for today anyway. Let’s just take one day towards retirement at a time. No plans yet. Just read and relax. Nap later. Dinner out. That’s my girl.”

Eleanor stretches out her legs again. She idly picks up the travel section and just as idly casts it aside for later. Just feeling the warmth of the fire on her stocking feet is enough for now. Colin is right. Restless legs indeed. She just wants to sleep a bit. How delicious—scones, fire, tea, no more works to walk in, just a big yawn; stretch out those legs.

“What I really want more than anything, I think, is a dog,” she remarks.

“Really?”

“I’ve always wanted a dog.”

Colin puts the paper down, giving her his full attention. Perhaps this is a better answer than yet another trip. He’s been struggling to think of something to get her for her birthday in April. Something to anchor her down, yet give her restless legs a reason to keep moving, work off their combustive energy. “What kind of dog?” he asks.

“Nothing too large and lumbering, but nothing small and yappy. A calm dog. And one that doesn’t shed.”

“I’d fancy a Corgi,” he says, “a Pembroke Corgi.” Again, he envisions the two of them walking the dog, or perhaps two, to Central Park, stopping to talk to other people with dogs. It would be nice, just the two of them together with a dog (or two). No more days by himself pottering around in the old brownstone, cooking for no one but himself, going out to movies and the ballet alone. No more anxious long distance calls from East Timor or from airports where the alert level is red or luggage has gone missing, or some riot or civil war is going on. No more ghastly embassy parties.

“Yes a Corgi, or a golden retriever,” Eleanor adds.

“Corgi. Pembroke.”

Eleanor starts to close her eyes and drift off. “Lily always wanted a dog, too. I’ve always wondered if they were bringing us one back from Montreal. I wonder if that’s why Lily never got a dog after we were older. But,” Eleanor yawns again, “I asked her once and she said she was having a difficult enough life without having to care about something else. And really, I don’t know how we would have managed it, she and I, along

with everything else. So now she has a faithful old raven. Fancy.” And with that Eleanor dozes off.

Colin helps himself to another scone and finishes three sections of the *Times*, before the phone rings. “Shit,” he says and lifts the receiver. Eleanor stirs across from him. “It’s Jim.”

“What in the world?” She takes the cordless from her husband. Eleanor’s brow creases deeper and deeper as she listens.

“Oh no,” she says into the receiver. “Yes, I understand that. Did you talk to them? Did you explain the situation to . . . ? Oh.” There is a long pause while Eleanor listens, her feet wagging more and more. “Yes, well . . . did she really? She always was the best shot. I can’t say as I blame her. I hate those flyovers, it’s totally against . . . Yes, I understand the military takes these things seriously, especially since that van blew up at the World Trade . . . All right! All right! But it’s February, is the road plowed out? Has she at least done that? Christ! I’ll call you back when we know what we’re doing here. Will you call us when you talk to her?” (Waggle, waggle.) “Of course I’m worried about her. We all worry about her. Yes, of course we’ll come. Yes, I can’t wait to see you either.” She listens for a few more minutes and then begs off.

“Dare I ask?” Colin asks, as she returns the handset.

“Lily,” she replies sullenly.

“Oh, I’m *so* sorry I did.”



It wasn’t but a couple of weeks before this when Tom Aiken stood mopping down the old oak top of the bar at Aiken’s Tap Room in Winslow Station, carrying on as he did. His audience of four was a group of college kids from St. Lawrence University in Canton—cross-country skiers on their way down to run the Jack Rabbit Trail and stopping off for a burger and a beer. He was telling them about the time he was hunting over on the other side of the lake.

“. . . and I come upon Lily Martindale bein’ mauled by a big black bear, oh, maybe two hundred’n fifty pounds and she, a little slip of a thing. Poor girl, to face a fate like that, but you take your chances bein’ a woman and livin’ alone in the woods,” he said.

He told these boys about how he tried to get a shot lined up but couldn’t without killing Lily too: so he waited until he had a clean

sightline. It was then he realized, he told the boys, that Lily wasn't being mauled by the bear. They were dancing; she was teaching the brute to dance.

Tom threw his thumb over his shoulder at the picture that hung on the wall behind the bar, the ubiquitous rendering of black bears dancing in an Adirondack woodland clearing. That old picture hangs in every store, every B&B, every library, every school up there. Tom Aiken complained that his Uncle Jack always had the pinups from the Stihl saw calendar above the mirror behind the bar—healthy Alpine maidens dressed in barely stitched together scraps of denim and calico. But after Uncle Jack died, Tom's wife, a churchgoing woman, made Tom take them all down, and hung the dancing bears there instead.

"So about this woman, who is this woman you're talking about?" asked one of the boys.

"Oh you don't know 'bout Lily Martindale, ol' Cinder-Lily?" Tom seemed amazed.

The boys looked at each other and shook their heads.

Tom mopped in circles with his terrycloth towel, talking as he worked, but never quite finishing either his task or the story. "Well, isn't that somethin', now," he said. "Seems like there wasn't a day not so very long ago, but before your time, when you couldn't pick up a newspaper or turn on a TV station without seein' a picture of Lily Martindale and Eleanor Winslow, whose family named this town, this lake. They were both America's little sweethearts, both of 'em, but especially Lily. Six years old and cute as a button. Terrible time it was, for them, for all of us here. But those two little girls. Well, you can't imagine. Poor things. They had everything and nothing."

The boys were drinking their second Saranac Pale Ale. Tom's wife, Mary Lou, brought out an extra order of fries for them on the house. Tom said, "I was just tellin' these boys about Lily and Eleanor."

"Lily and Eleanor? Them two. Yeah. Quite the story."

The boys from SLU were dividing up the French fries and talking among themselves, except for the one on the end who asked Tom, "Who are these two girls?"

"Oh not girls now, not by a long shot. This was many years ago," Mary Lou explained as she picked up one of their glass mugs to refill. "A long time ago, it was."

Tom picked up the next twig of the branching tree of a story that would never grow to blossom in this hour at this bar with these customers. “Little hellion she was, was Lily. Come in here when she was a teenager and sing and dance and carry on. Nice girl, but a little, you know, carried away at times. Not no more. Twelve years alone in the woods will drive you to dance with bears. She’s teachin’ the bears to dance, by God; she’s dancin’ with bears.”