

~~BROOKE. (Exhausted but smiling.) Please — I beg you. Stop trying to make me laugh — this is not in the slightest bit funny.~~  
~~SILDA. (Quietly, while applying makeup.) Okay. No. Lyman is not unkind. But. (Beat.) But life is chemical. And a chemical reaction happens when two people get together, and in this case, a certain kind of ambition, and striving overtook the actual human beings. Your parents are holding onto the last bits of power and influence they had, and they can't imagine a world in which you have the right to speak of it. Critically. (Beat.) They tried so hard to turn Henry into one of them; cut his hair, sent him to a boarding school for delinquents, forbid him to express any antiwar sentiment in their home, forbid his friends to enter the house — they tried to clean him up, but he fought as hard as he could. I tried to protect him — to give him something. But I was no match. (Beat.) These people, driven by fear, have taken ownership of an entire country. And fear — fear led to punishment and in the case of your brother, even at the cost of a life itself — just to hold on to the “way things were.” You managed to explain in one little book, in one book. And you did it just by telling the story of this family. (Beat.) Isn't that something? (Silda stares at Brooke, not doing her makeup for a moment. When she goes on, it is with great clarity, specificity, urgency.) So, please. I am begging you. Don't back down. Brooke: You are stronger than Henry was. Your book gives him everything I couldn't. And I am telling you what I told him! “Do what you must! Fight on.” (Beat.) Don't back down. Do it for him, for Henry, do not back down! You'll win, because you have ideas, and they only have fear!~~

~~BROOKE. (Looking around the room.) There are no pictures of him. How do you do that? Have no pictures of your son? Look around: Sinatra, Rock Hudson, you, Barry Goldwater, me, me and Trip in Mexico, Nancy, Dad in any number of movies. Look at him. Mom and Dinah Shore.~~  
~~SILDA. I introduced them. They had chemistry.~~  
~~BROOKE. (She picks up a picture.) One picture of Henry. Age seventeen. In Ojai at school. Look. He looked like the best of both of them. He was supposed to be an actor. He played Hamlet in high school. He understood that play. All that ambivalence. All that rage, God, he understood it. Tall, long shock of hair, silent, quiet, royal. But this surfer version, this California golden boy Hamlet. (Lyman has returned with an armful of firewood. He drops it next to the fireplace.)~~

SILDA

~~LYMAN. (Quiet, dark.) He was wonderful. He would have been a movie star.~~

~~SILDA. Your tea. (She points to the cup and saucer. Lyman nods.) Are you okay?~~

~~LYMAN. (Something distant about him, keeping his own counsel.) I think I might be catching a bit of something. A little bug of some sort. (Silda goes to the bar and pours whiskey into his cup.)~~

~~SILDA. This'll help. God knows. (He takes a sip.)~~

~~LYMAN. (Beat, quietly.) I never wrote my memoir, because it would have hurt our friends, how hard it was, after Henry was implicated the way he was, how they all vanished and your mother refused to accept it. She circled the wagons. Around me. Borne out of thinking I'm easily bruised. I am not easily bruised. (Beat. There is a certain intense, lost quality in his telling of this. It is not easy; a story never shared. It is an illustrative story, meant to draw her in.) But she would not let them off the hook, she's the only woman to have faced down Nancy Reagan, Betsy Bloomingdale, and Mrs. Annenberg at the same lunch and reduced them all to tears. Tears of shame for their unconscionable behavior — (A growl.) As though I had placed that bomb. Your mother reminded them all who we really were, and of their obligations to honor loyal friends — Nancy went to Ronnie and sat him down, they had a dinner for us at the L.A. Country Club and everyone came out. Yes. Now they were our friends again. And by the time Ronnie was president, they made me ambassador ... (His eyes well up, he grins through it, the way older men do, when telling these sorts of stories.)~~

~~BROOKE. I didn't know it went down like that. That Mom did that.~~

~~LYMAN. (Implying.) Please don't do this. I cannot embarrass those people. They're, some of them, alive still — ! You can do what you like after we're gone! Do you not understand that? It's simply good manners. It's as simple as that!~~

~~BROOKE. (Serious and quiet.) Well, let me tell you, good manners have got me into a lot of trouble, Dad. Probably you too. I am past the point of good manners.~~

~~LYMAN. (And finally, knowing he lost, letting the bitterness come out, unmasked, no longer the diplomat.) You have so much of your mother in you. You don't like any weakness, especially in yourself. You can't forgive it. (Beat.) It is why you ended up in a damn hospital! Well — if you can't forgive yourself, I suppose it's futile to ask~~

START

END