

October 1937

*Abyssinia, kiddo.*

Those were the last words Goldie Greenberg’s mother ever said to her, and they echoed through the hollow spaces in Goldie’s heart as she swung her legs over the windowsill and dropped into the cold autumn dark. She landed with a solid *thunk* on the slanted porch roof below her bedroom window and had a moment of panic as her feet slid forward in her too-large men’s work boots. (Women’s shoes fit better, of course, but T-straps and high heels were too impractical for Goldie’s line of work.) She nearly lost her balance and came dangerously close to tumbling off the roof before she pinwheeled her arms and righted herself, wishing sorrow and crotch spiders on the makers of women’s footwear.

A light came on in the bathroom and Goldie’s heart completed its descent into her stomach. Had she already been caught? She briefly considered diving off the roof—a broken ankle sounded more appealing than facing her dad if he caught her sneaking out again—but after a long, breathless moment, water gurgled through the elderly pipes and the house went dark and quiet again.

*Abyssinia, kiddo.*

She counted out another thirty seconds for safety—an eternity crouched on the porch roof, a soft spot in the old wood causing it to buckle beneath her weight, spotlighted like an escaping prisoner in the glow of the streetlamp in front of her house. When she was sure the coast was clear, Goldie climbed down the trellis and retrieved the canvas bag she’d hidden behind a bush earlier that day.

*Abyssinia, kiddo.*

*I’ll be seein’ ya, kiddo.*