

Birdie slammed her heel into the kickstarter. The Norton sputtered, let out a wet cough, then died.

“Come on,” she muttered, and kicked again. This time the engine caught with a resentful roar, the whole frame shuddering beneath her knees.

She’d retimed the ignition the night before, working under a bare bulb with a headache that still hadn’t let up. All she could do now was hope the Norton held together long enough to get her to Brooklyn and back before Gildersleeve knew she was gone. A quick twist of the throttle made the engine rattle louder.

“Professor Moretti!”

Birdie turned. One of her freshmen was hurrying across the quad, waving a bundle of papers like a white flag.

The girl skidded to a stop, cheeks pink from the run. “I fixed the oxidation question. I think I see why it’s exothermic now. Is it too late to turn it in?”

Birdie glanced at the name on the page. “Vera,” she said, “if your answer doesn’t say the reaction gives off heat, you’ve missed the point.”

The girl’s face fell. Birdie sighed. “I’m in a hurry. Slide it under my door.”

She twisted the throttle. The engine snarled in reply.

Vera raised her voice over it. “Professor Fenwick said I was to tell you the Dean was looking for you.”

Birdie pulled her goggles over her eyes. “Dean Gildersleeve can find me after lunch.”

“She said now.” Vera swallowed. “Something about your promotion.”

Birdie paused, then pushed the goggles back up onto her forehead.

*God damn it.* So she knew.