

The background of the entire page is a photograph of a town square at night. The scene is dominated by a teal and blue color palette. In the center, there is a grand, ornate theater building with a prominent sign that reads "A NOVEL". The building is illuminated from within, and its lights reflect on the surrounding structures. To the left, a street lamp glows brightly, casting a soft light. The sky is dark and filled with numerous small, bright stars, creating a starry night effect. The overall atmosphere is serene and evocative, suggesting a quiet moment in a small town.

MATTHEW  
QUICK

*New York Times* Bestselling Author of  
THE SILVER LININGS PLAYBOOK

WE ARE  
THE  
LIGHT

“A timely, lovely, and  
sometimes heartbreaking novel  
of grief and hope, beautifully told  
through a series of letters that shine  
light on our capacity to heal,  
even after tragedy.”

—MITCH ALBOM,  
author of *The Stranger in the Lifeboat*

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M A T T H E W  
Q U I C K

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*For the wise and generous Jungian who finally got me to click my heels  
together three times. Thank you.*

VOCATUS ATQUE NON VOCATUS DEUS ADERIT

*“Invoked or not invoked, the god is present.”*

—WRITTEN ON CARL JUNG’S HEADSTONE

1.

Dear Karl,

First, I want to apologize for coming to your consulting room even after receiving the letter saying you were no longer practicing and, therefore, could no longer be my—or anyone else's—analyst.

I realize that your consulting room is connected to your home and since you've stopped practicing it's probably become *part* of your house now, making it off-limits to me. I was on autopilot. Every Friday night at seven p.m. for almost fourteen months. That's a hard habit to break. And psyche kept saying, "Go. Karl needs you," which was initially confusing because I'm the analysand and you are the analyst, so I'm supposed to need you and not the other way around. But you always told me to listen to psyche and that the goal of analysis was to individuate and know the Self well enough to align with it. Well, my psyche really wants a relationship with you. It keeps saying you need my help. Also, Darcy told me to keep going to analysis. And I just generally wanted to go, as well. I've really missed our weekly "analytic container," our two hours. Friday nights.

It was hard to manage everything without our sessions, especially at first. Many people offered to find me a new you, but I kept telling everyone I'd wait for Karl. I have to admit, I didn't initially think I'd be waiting so long. Please don't feel bad. The last thing I want to do is guilt-trip you, especially given all we've been through, collectively and individually. I just want you to understand. And you always say that I should tell you everything and never hold back.

I, too, haven't been able to return to work since the tragedy. I tried a few times, but never made it out of my car. I just sat there in the faculty parking lot watching the students streaming into the building. Some would look over at me with concerned expressions and I couldn't tell whether I wanted them to

help me or if I wanted to be invisible. It was the strangest sensation. Do you ever feel that way? I'd grip the steering wheel so hard my knuckles would turn white.

Isaiah—my boss and friend and principal of Majestic High, in case you forgot—eventually would come out and sit down in my passenger seat. He'd put his hand on my shoulder and tell me that I'd helped a lot of kids already and now it was time to help myself. He comes to my house all the time too. Because he's very religious, he'll say, "Lucas, you're one of the best men I've ever met and I'm absolutely sure Jesus has a plan for you." Sometimes he and his wife, Bess, cook me dinner in my own kitchen, which is nice. They bring all the food and everything. Bess always says, "Lucas, you have to eat. You're wasting away to nothing," and it's true. Isaiah's a great friend. A good man. Bess is a fantastic woman. But Darce—you'll remember that's what I sometimes call Darcy, dropping the last syllable—says I can't tell anyone about her transformation, and so it's hard, because I can only nod and press my lips together whenever Isaiah and Bess say God has a plan for me, which makes them think I'm agreeing, rather than holding in a tremendous secret.

I went to their church a few Sunday mornings, back in January, for what Isaiah calls "worship." I was the only white person there, which was interesting. I like the gospel singing. The first time I went, the purple-and-gold-robed pastor called me up to the altar and put his hand on my head and loudly prayed for me. Then he asked everyone in the congregation to come up and lay their hands on me while they also prayed. I've never in my life had so many hands on me. It was a kind gesture that I appreciated, but the funny thing was that I couldn't stop shaking, even when the touching and praying ceased and the singing started again, which was uplifting. I thought I was having a seizure.

I kept going to Sunday service, but after a few weeks no one prayed for me anymore and I kind of felt like I was invading something—like maybe I was an interloper. When I told him how I felt, Isaiah said, "Ain't no unwelcomed guests in God's house," which was nice, but Darcy said I shouldn't wear out my welcome and so I stopped going to church, even though I liked and maybe even needed it. Perhaps I'll go back at the end of the year for the Christmas season if Isaiah keeps asking me. Darcy said maybe that would be okay.

Last December, I attended seventeen of the eighteen funerals. Well, at least part of each. The funeral homes tried to make it so that no two services

overlapped, because that's the way we bereaved wanted it. But a few funerals ended up partially conflicting, mostly because everyone wanted their burials to happen before Christmas. I would have made at least an appearance at all eighteen, but the police wouldn't let me into Jacob Hansen's service. And I have to say your Leandra's—which I attended in its entirety—was perhaps the best. I liked the way you personalized everything and resisted a more traditional format. I didn't even know your wife played the cello until you showed that video of her in your living room the day before the tragedy. It made me realize how one-sided analysis can be, since you knew almost everything about my Darcy, and yet, I didn't know your Leandra's profession. I'm not sure I even knew her name before the tragedy, which is hard to believe, especially since we'd see you two at the Majestic Theater and we'd always exchange waves and smiles from a respectable non-boundary-crossing distance.

I also admire how you led the funeral yourself without the help of a minister or rabbi or priest. I'm not sure I would have been able to do that, even though Darcy's funeral was just staged for appearances and her casket was obviously empty.

If you were worried about missing Darcy's funeral, please don't be. Like I said above, it wasn't real. And I'm not sure anyone but me even noticed your absence at all the others.

Anyway, in the video you screened at your wife's funeral—as you will certainly remember—Leandra was practicing for a solo she was to perform at a Christmas-themed show and the song she was playing really made me believe that I had to tell you about my numinous experience. It seemed like a sign. Proof that you and I were in this together and that I wasn't going insane.

You'll remember that the song was “Angels We Have Heard on High.”

I was surprised at how such a small woman could handle such a big instrument. And I marveled at the ethereal sounds your wife massaged out with her wonderful bow work. It was miraculous watching Leandra playing at her own funeral and I almost ran up to the pulpit right then and there. It was like God had come down from heaven and commanded me to tell you the good news about the tragedy, which was strange because I'm not religious. I'm not entirely certain that I even believe in God.

I didn't run up to the pulpit, of course, but sat on my hands. And then Leandra's version of “Angels We Have Heard on High” played over and over



again in my brain, producing a sense of ecstasy. My body was right there in the pew, but my soul—or psyche—was somewhere high above, marveling at the early morning sunlight streaming through the stained-glass depictions of saints.

I don't remember anything else until I was standing at the back of the crowd that had gathered by Leandra's open grave. Darcy's best friend, Jill, was holding my hand. I was wearing dark sunglasses when my soul slipped back into my body. And you were crying violently with a hand on your wife's white casket. It was like your black suit was heavy armor, because you were hunched over in a way that aged you, making you look more like ninety-eight than seventy-eight. You couldn't catch your breath, so it became impossible for you to speak, let alone conclude the funeral. No one knew what to do because there was no priest or minister or rabbi to take the lead. And you wouldn't let anyone else help you. You kept waving—and even literally pushing—people away. Then you started saying, "The service is over. Go home. Please just leave me alone." Everyone was feeling cautious and unsure until Robin Withers—the town's head librarian, whose husband, Steve, was also killed, in case you don't know her—put a hand on the casket, crossed herself, kissed you on the cheek, and then gracefully departed. That seemed to calm you down. So everyone followed Robin's good lead, including Jill and me, who were the last two people to exit.

But when I made it to Jill's truck, I looked back and you were still crying all alone, only there were two men nearby smoking cigarettes next to a backhoe. They had on shark-colored jumpsuits, black gloves, and beanie hats. And their dead eyes were watching you.

Jill tried to stop me, but I broke free of her arms and strode over to you. You were crying so hard I thought maybe you were dying, but I told you about Darcy having wings now and my seeing your Leandra and all of the others rise from the lifeless pools of blood, back at the Majestic Theater. And I described for you their collective graceful ascent toward the heavens. Their white feathers sparkling like opals. The steady pulse of flapping. The dignity and glory and compensation. I don't know how much you heard through your sobbing. I'm happy to give you a more detailed report whenever we resume our Friday-night sessions, which is what this letter is in service of. I'm very much open to being questioned.

I miss sitting on the worn leather seat and staring at your large black glasses. I miss the little forest of totem pole cacti by the windows and the “phallic energy” those strange green plants would supply us. I miss seeing the deep wrinkles in your face, which always reassured me, because they appeared hard-won—like they had been etched by the accumulation of great wisdom. But mostly I miss the healing energy that always flowed so naturally between us.

Bobby the cop says I’m not allowed to knock on your door anymore, which I have stopped doing, if you haven’t noticed. But psyche says I must keep trying to reconnect with you in one way or another. Psyche says it’s vital. That your very life might depend on it. Darcy suggested writing letters, as a safe compromise, saying, “What harm can a letter do? No one was ever hurt by words on a piece of paper. If it’s too much for Karl, he can simply refold the paper, slip it back into the envelope, and read it later.” She also said I was a pretty clever correspondent. We used to send letters when we were in college, since we attended different universities back in the early nineties. And I have always loved writing, so I thought, why not?

I don’t know if you remember, but early on—when you first started analyzing me—you... well, you looked deep into my eyes for what felt like fifteen minutes and then you said, “I love you, Lucas.” It really made me uncomfortable at the time. I even went home and googled *What to do when your therapist says I love you*. That was back before I understood the difference between an analyst and a therapist. Pretty much everything I found on the internet said I should immediately stop seeing you, because your saying “I love you” was unethical and boundary-crossing. And I almost did stop coming to analysis, mostly because I was afraid. Other than Darcy, no one had ever said “I love you” to me before. Not with sincerity. But then, as we spent two hours together every Friday night, I started to get better and I began to understand what you meant when you said your soul could love my soul because it’s everyone’s soul’s purpose to love, just like it’s the job of our lungs and nose to breathe; and our mouths to chew and taste; and our feet to walk. As we banked more and more Friday nights together, I started to believe that you actually did love me—not in a sexual way or even a friend way. You loved me the way the best of a human being naturally loves the best of any and every other human being once you remove all the toxic interference.

That's why I feel it's important for me to say, "I love you too, Karl," especially since I never managed to say that to you before now. I wanted to so many times, because you helped me clean up so many of my complexes. Darcy kept daring me to tell you I love you, but I obviously couldn't before now.

I love you, Karl.

And I want to help you.

You can't hide in your home for the rest of your life.

You are not a shut-in; you just can't be.

Psyche keeps saying I need to break through your neurotic bubble of isolationism.

You need to help me, obviously, but you will also resume helping many other people once you have properly mourned Leandra's murder and healed your heart. I'm absolutely certain.

Is there anything I can do to speed up the process?

What do you need?

I'm willing to do just about anything.

Your most loyal analysand,

Lucas

## 2.

Dear Karl,

I didn't expect you to write back after only one letter, so rest assured, my determination has not been daunted by your lack of a reply. Quite the opposite, actually.

I didn't, however, know the appropriate amount of time to wait before I wrote the second letter. Was one week too long or too short? Based on all the work we've done together, I'm guessing you might say something like, "Well, perhaps you shouldn't make up arbitrary rules. Perhaps you should trust psyche to guide you. What does psyche want? Get very quiet. Close your eyes. Breathe. Drop down. And then listen."

Just a few hours after I slid the first letter through the outgoing mail slot at the Majestic Post Office, I did exactly what I thought you'd recommend. Meditating on a public bench under the Japanese maple tree near the Wawa. And psyche clearly said to write you again right away, immediately—that very night! The impulse was commanding. But I figured I had better give you at least a fair shot at responding, just so our correspondence wouldn't turn into an ugly Lucas-only monologue.

Darcy agreed, saying, "You don't want to come on too strong when wooing widowers," which she meant as a joke. She used to kid me about going to see "my boyfriend" on Friday nights and would jokingly tell Jill I was cheating on my wife with you. I didn't ever tell you about that teasing before because of what you said about keeping our analysis sacred, meaning not telling anyone about it. You used to say it was like cooking rice with steam. If you take the lid off the pot, all the steam evaporates and then the alchemical process can no longer take place. But I had to tell Darce about my analysis because she balances the checkbook and Jill was her best friend, meaning that she told Jill everything, back when Darce was still human. I don't think Jill told anyone

about the therapeutic relationship you and I had and hopefully still have. I asked her recently and she said she had sensed it was private and therefore kept the information to herself. Jill's all right like that, which is why I don't understand Darce's need to keep Jill in the dark now, regarding Darcy's wings and her choosing to remain behind here on earth. I consult with Darce every single night, but I'm not allowed to tell Jill about that, which I think is just plain cruel.

But that's who I'd like to talk about tonight—Jill. Because something bad happened and I'm not really sure what to do about it. This was primarily the reason why, even after Bobby the cop's sternest of warnings, I started obsessively coming to your consulting room again, hoping you'd be willing to grant me an emergency session. I was pretty much able to handle the Majestic Theater tragedy—horrific as it was—on my own, but this thing with Jill has really eaten away at my conscience, especially since it's the one secret I've kept from Darce. Since she's no longer human, I sort of think she might already know what happened, but it's hard to tell. Even if she forgives—or miraculously already has forgiven—me, I still don't think I'm going to be able to forgive myself.

I wanted to tell you all of this face-to-face, which is why I didn't include it in the last letter, but I just can't hold it in anymore.

I can't remember how much I've said about Jill in our sessions—honestly, I'm having trouble remembering all kinds of things these days—so I'll just start from the beginning and assume you've never heard about Jill before.

Darcy absorbs the energy of others nicely and quietly, while Jill radiates energy. Darcy often de-escalates. Jill almost always escalates. Sometimes escalation is good and sometimes de-escalation is better, which made them quite the team.

To put everything in context, you have to understand that no one has done more for me in the past so many months than Jill.

Have you ever been to the Cup Of Spoons coffee shop? Across the street from the historic and now infamous Majestic Theater? Even though I've never personally seen you at the Cup Of Spoons, you definitely have eaten there, right? Everyone in town loves that place. Well, Jill owns it. She's the blonde in the kitchen, the one who comes around and asks how your day is and knows your name and smiles at you in a way that seems to do more than the caffeine

ever could. She was one of the few people in this world who could make Darce laugh until she cried. Darce once literally peed her pants when she and Jill were laughing one night after a few too many bottles of wine. Jill was doing impressions of me when that happened, spoofing on how careful I always am about everything.

Anyway, after the tragedy, while all of you were being treated at the hospital, I was being interviewed at the police station. I, of course, waived all my rights because I hadn't done anything wrong. Darce said it was fine to do this. And so I let a nice woman photograph the blood on my hands and take samples from under my nails and then—in a room with a video camera recording me—I told a few detectives and police officers exactly what had happened in the Majestic Theater. Naturally, I left out the part about Darce and Leandra and the fifteen others turning into angels, but I was one hundred percent truthful about everything else.

It took me a good hour or so to remember the following, but then it hit me. One of the police officers used to be a teenager I worked with a few decades ago. He was looking at me differently. The others appeared almost afraid of the words coming out of my mouth, but Bobby's eyes were welcoming and reassuring. Several times during the interview, he said, "Mr. Goodgame helped me when I was in high school. I probably wouldn't have graduated if it wasn't for him." I don't know why he kept saying things like that, but it really helped me get through the interrogation. And when I concluded my testimony, Bobby declared me a hero, which seemed to annoy the other police officers in the room, probably because they wanted to remain objective and not rush to any conclusions, which is always the best way. Still, I appreciated Bobby's taking my side and his understanding the more-than-obvious facts that explained why I had blood on my hands.

When I was finished being video recorded, I was surprised to find Jill yelling in the front part of the police station, saying that I shouldn't have been interviewed without legal counsel, which was when I told her it was okay because I hadn't done anything wrong—and I really hadn't.

"We're going to get you out of here right now," Jill said, which was strange because it was only her there, so I didn't really understand why she was using the plural pronoun.

Outside in her parked truck with the heat blowing on full blast, she let the engine idle for a long time before she looked over at me and said, “Is Darcy really gone?”

Because Darcy had sworn me to silence, back in the Majestic Theater, I didn’t know how to answer that question, so I just stared at my hands, which Jill incorrectly took to mean that my wife had indeed been killed and therefore no longer existed, which I have already told you is not correct. This is when Jill began sobbing uncontrollably. Her chest heaved so hard I thought she might choke to death, so I grabbed her and—in an effort to get her to stop coughing—pulled her close into my body, which worked, although it took her more than thirty minutes to calm down. At some point, I began to stroke her hair, which smelled like honeysuckle, and tell her she was okay, that everything was all right, and it really was, even though I couldn’t exactly tell her why.

Jill stayed the night at our home and then sort of unofficially moved in with me. She closed the Cup Of Spoons for the month of December so she could accompany me to the seventeen sometimes-overlapping funerals and she ran interference for me whenever anyone wanted to ask questions I didn’t want to answer. Reporters quickly learned to fear her. And Jill was also very good at keeping my mother at arm’s length during Darcy’s funeral, which—and you’ll be happy to hear this—also helped to keep my mother complex at bay. Whenever my mother tried to corner me at the reception, Jill would interrupt and say, “Excuse me, Mrs. Goodgame, but I need to steal Lucas for a moment.” Whenever Mom would say, “But I’m his mother!” Jill would pretend like she didn’t hear Mom and then pull me away by the hand. When my mother first flew up from Florida, it was Jill who told Mom that she had to stay in a hotel and not in my house, which I didn’t even realize was a possibility.

I don’t know whether I would have made it through all those funerals if I didn’t have Jill. And she was very supportive when I couldn’t find my way back into the high school. She always echoed everyone else, saying I had already helped so many teenagers and now it was time to help myself, which was kind and made me feel a little better about my malaise.

The problem happened when Jill tried to outthink my grieving.

It was maybe four or so months after the tragedy, right before you had Bobby the cop gently tell me I’d be arrested if I didn’t cease knocking on your consulting-room door and peeking through your windows every Friday night.

Jill and I were sitting at Darcy's and my kitchen table, eating tuna-fish sandwiches that Jill had brought home from the Cup Of Spoons, when she said, "I think you and I should go away for a few days. Specifically, the first week in May." When I asked why, she reminded me that it was Darcy's and my wedding anniversary—our twenty-fifth—on May 3. Jill knew because she was Darcy's maid of honor. Her offer put me in a bind. I wanted to spend my twenty-fifth wedding anniversary with Darcy, but Jill thought Darcy was dead, which was why Jill was always hanging around our house now. Jill wanted to take me somewhere Darcy and I had never been so that the pain of missing my wife might not be as bad, which was sweet of Jill. I said I would think about it, but when I met up with Darcy later that night in my bedroom with the door locked, Darce said, "You're going!"

"But I want to spend our twenty-fifth anniversary with you, not your best friend," I protested, which was when Darcy put her foot down and said Jill wasn't yet ready to know the truth about my wife being an angel and, therefore, there was no excuse that would get me safely around going away with Jill for my anniversary. I sort of saw the sense in what Darcy was saying and—as she promised to fly to wherever Jill and I would be staying—I didn't see the harm in traveling, especially since Jill and I would be in separate rooms, so there would be more than enough time for Darcy and me to be intimate on our anniversary.

Jill booked us two rooms in a seaside hotel in coastal Maryland. We drove to the little island and I could see a small, squat, trapezoid-shaped lighthouse from my bedroom window, which I thought Darce would like when she arrived later that night, as she loved lighthouses.

Jill and I hopped on rented bikes and rode around with helmets on, sipping water out of the hydration pouches we wore on our backs. Then we lay on the beach and went swimming in the cold ocean whenever we got too hot. When the sun set, we showered up and had a seafood dinner at the hotel restaurant.

As we leisurely made our way through three bottles of wine, Jill talked nonstop about Darcy, telling stories I had heard a million times before. Like the one about how they used to sneak out of their bedroom windows in the middle of the night when they were kids and then meet in this field where the Walgreens now is. And they would bathe naked in the ghostly moonlight. And listen to crickets. And sweat in the summer heat. She told me about how Darcy



and her ditched their senior prom dates for two other guys they met on the Wildwood boardwalk during prom weekend. They ended up driving to New York City with these guys, who turned out to be junior Wall Street traders fresh out of college. The four of them ate a picnic breakfast in Central Park.

Darce and I were only friends in high school. I didn't even go to our prom. She and I didn't fall in love until I started writing her letters when we were both away from Majestic for the first time. Darce and Jill were an odd couple—especially when we all were kids. Darcy was short and small with chin-length black hair. My wife was always cute and approachable. Jill was as tall as most boys. Her straight blond hair cascaded down to her butt. She floated through the high school hallways like a goddess. I would have never dreamed of speaking to her back then. As adults, Jill was the one who was always nervously telling jokes and Darcy was the one who was always quick to laugh, throwing her head back and roaring with her mouth wide open. My wife was easy to please and Jill was a pleaser. Jill's looks often made other girls self-conscious but my wife was always very comfortable in her own skin. Jill was impulsive. Darcy was thoughtful. All of the Jill and Darcy puzzle pieces just naturally snapped together. For every tab, knob, and loop one had, the other had a corresponding blank, hole, or socket. They were a perfect fit.

But—back in the Maryland seafood restaurant—Jill was talking about how Darcy was there for her when Jill divorced Derek, who used to hit Jill hard enough to leave bruises in places that were easily covered by clothing. Derek, who I never liked, was able to avoid legal trouble because his brother was a high-powered lawyer and Jill only started talking about the abuse after all the bruises had healed, so there was no documentation. Instead of cracking open the crabs in front of her and enjoying her meal, Jill went on and on about how she might have killed herself if it hadn't been for Darcy's help, and then she started really slurring words, which was when I realized she had drunk almost all of the wine by herself. So I helped her get into her bed upstairs, put some bottles of water on her bedside table, and then slipped away to wait for Darcy in my own room.

The lighthouse was spinning its great beam of light around and every so many seconds my window became illuminated. There were light-blocking shades, but I didn't want to keep the beam out. I pictured Darcy using it to find me. I also pictured the gigantic smile on her face when she saw we were

staying near a real working lighthouse, the rhythm of which she could appreciate all night long. There were mosquitoes and biting flies, but I opened the screen anyway and waited for Darcy.

I must have fallen asleep because a knock at the door woke me up. I was still half dreaming when I made my way over to see who was there. I figured they had the wrong room, because Jill was passed out and Darcy would surely use the window. But when I opened the door, I was overtaken by a rush of passion, which could only have come from a loving wife on a twenty-fifth wedding anniversary. Hands groped my back as a mouth greedily sucked my own. It felt like she was trying to extract my soul. Before I knew it, I was on my back. And aroused. And then I was inside her. And her hair was brushing against my cheeks. When I began smelling honeysuckle, I started screaming, “Get off me! Get off me! Please! Stop!”

And then Jill had my face in her hands and she was whispering, saying everything was okay and that she was sorry and that we were just drunk and that it didn’t mean anything, but I couldn’t stop shaking. It felt like I was about to have a seizure. And then it felt like there was someone inside me trying to carve his way out with knives that were too blunt to cut so they just scraped and scraped but never broke through to the exterior of me. And so I lay on my back, moaning, which upset Jill, I know, because she started crying. Then she said—over and over, almost chanting—that she was a horrible person who didn’t deserve love, which immediately shifted something deep inside me. Without thinking, I grabbed Jill and held her. I told her that the best part of my soul loved the best part of her soul. And even though she didn’t respond, I kept telling her the best part of my soul loved the best part of her soul until she fell asleep in my bed.

Then I watched the great lighthouse beam go round and round until the sun came up. Darcy never arrived, of course, because she didn’t want Jill to see her wings. The shock of seeing her best friend as an angel might have killed Jill dead. A small part of me resented Jill for keeping Darcy away on our anniversary, but the resentful part of me vanished by morning, at which point we ate our continental breakfast in the hotel lobby before deciding to leave a day early and making the long, mostly silent drive home.

When Jill pulled into my driveway, she shifted into park, turned off the engine, and stared at the lower half of the steering wheel for a long time before

she said, “Did I ruin everything?”

I, of course, told her she hadn’t and that we should chalk it up to the wine and that we didn’t ever need to talk about what had happened in Maryland again. She thanked me and made a half-hearted joke about being an alcoholic, but I didn’t laugh. Instead, I looked into her eyes and said, “You are worthy of love.” I was surprised to see that I had taken her chin in my hand and she was looking up at me with wet eyes, but she eventually swallowed and nodded a few times, which was when I let go of her.

Inside my house, we ordered a pizza and watched a forgettable movie from opposite ends of the couch, where she fell asleep and spent the night.

When I met up with Darcy in our bedroom, I told her everything that had happened except for my being inside Jill for that brief moment. And Darcy told me that I had done what was necessary and that she was proud of me, which made me feel awful for obvious reasons. But then she said that Jill and I needed each other and she was happy that we were taking care of one another. I sort of fell forward at this point and Darce wrapped me in her wings and held me until I felt so hot I thought I might spontaneously combust into flames.

When the sun rose, I woke up naked on the bedroom floor. I immediately replayed everything that had happened. I began to feel nauseous when I got to the part where I had lied to Darce. I wondered whether she had seen me with Jill. Since becoming an angel, Darcy seems to know everything about my new life without my having to tell her, which has taken some getting used to, to say the least. But she said nothing about what happened between Jill and me in the hotel room and I haven’t said anything either. For the first time since we started officially dating back in ninety-two, I began to feel a little distant from my wife, which made me worry that my marriage might be in trouble.

I thought it would help to speak with Jill, but she wasn’t in the guest room or on the couch. She was already back at the Cup Of Spoons serving breakfast to the good citizens of Majestic, PA.

The next thing I knew, I was speed walking, and then I was outside your home, on the sidewalk, looking to see if I could catch a glimpse of you, but your shades were drawn like always. I didn’t want to risk getting arrested, so I kept walking. For some reason I walked past Jacob Hansen’s home maybe eighteen or so times, daring myself to look over and see if Jacob’s younger brother, Eli, or their mother might be in the front yard watering the flowers or

something. I fantasized about one of them waving at me in a friendly, forgiving way. But no matter how many times I walked past, I couldn't make myself look. Not even once.

Like always, whenever I passed my fellow Majestic townsmen and townswomen, they nodded or tipped their hats like I was a saint or a superhero or some such nonsense, which is really starting to bother me. Whatever miracle happened in the Majestic Theater, I wasn't responsible for it, no matter what the rumors around town might say. But I got to wondering whether those rumors had made me irresistible to Jill, who—even in her late forties—is still more beautiful than any movie star you can imagine. It's like the hometown-hero narrative that the local and then national media pushed has bewitched everyone except me, which has been more than a little disorienting, to put it mildly.

Did you have many reporters bothering you back in December? Jill used to throw snowballs at them when they were camped outside my home for those first few weeks. When it got really cold, she started filling up balloons with water and firing those too. Bobby the cop told her she had to stop doing that. She used to get so angry. I'd just sneak out the back door and hop fences whenever I wanted to get away and take my walks. Sometimes they found me and followed me around town. I'd just ignore them. I actually could block all of that out pretty well by hiding deep inside myself. But after Christmas, most of the media people went away to chase fresher stories.

Darce says my hometown-hero persona is good cover, meaning the misinformation that's been circulating since the tragedy allows my wife to hang around Majestic and visit me every night. She says if people knew the truth, angel-hunting season would begin and then that would be it for our relationship, which I guess I can understand. I don't want my wife to be hunted.

I asked Darce whether we should be worried about you keeping my confidence, especially since I'm now writing these tell-all letters, but Darcy says I'm protected by that piece of paper we both signed at the beginning of my treatment, the one that says we agree to keep our analytic container sacred, meaning what we discuss must be kept a secret from everyone outside of our container. Even though you tried to end my treatment prematurely, psyche tells me I can still trust you to keep all of this confidential.