

FROM

The Daylight Marriage

BY HEIDI PITLOR



Thirty hours after he had kissed Hannah good-bye and headed off for work, Lovell waited, his chest pounding, on the front steps of a brick bunker, where by a set of automatic glass doors he met Bob Duncan, a short, doughy detective with sprawling black eyebrows and a crushing handshake.

“You’re not a small man,” Duncan said, looking up at Lovell’s face.

“My parents are both tall.” At six feet, five inches, he heard this sort of thing all the time, but it sounded different now.

He followed the detective into an overheated office barely large enough for its desk and two metal chairs. Lovell had contacted the police himself this morning and reported her missing. He had had no idea what else to do. Should he have come out and told the kids that she was probably in the process of leaving him? She had taken off once about a year ago and spent the night at her sister’s, although she did return early the next morning, before the kids woke.

Duncan had already spoken with Janine and several of Lovell’s coworkers and Ethan and one of his teachers, who had seen Hannah yesterday morning. Lovell knew that the detective had talked to Sophie, whom Hannah had called that morning, and even a neighbor, who had confirmed that Lovell’s car had remained in the driveway during the nights before and after she went missing. Wasn’t interrogating the neighbors and the rest of them a little much? A thought materialized: What if one of them had heard his and Hannah’s exchange? What if the kids had said something to Duncan?

The detective had called about an hour ago and gave no indication that he knew anything about an argument. He had asked Lovell to come down to the station and bring one of Hannah’s hairbrushes, “one full of hair, if

you've got it." Duncan said that a bracelet, maybe hers, had turned up. A hairbrush? A bracelet? Lovell had thought that this was beginning to seem more like an investigation than a search effort.

Now Duncan said, "Just so you know, we found the bracelet on a beach in South Boston."

"Southie?"

"Yep. Carson Beach. Be right back." He left Lovell alone.

Lovell dropped his eyes to the eggplant-colored carpet. The room was still. He had the sensation of standing alone in the eye of a storm. Every second of this grew stranger and more unnerving. He thought for some reason of Boston University and Doug Bowen. Neither had anything to do with South Boston, as far as he knew.

Lovell had given her several bracelets over the years. Had she gone for a walk and, thinking back on that last night, decided to heave one of them into the ocean?

Duncan returned and handed Lovell a heavy plastic bag with a bracelet inside. The silver links, the small amber beads. He had gotten her this one for their last wedding anniversary. Lovell's mouth went dry. The detective waited, his thumbs dug into his pants pockets.

Lovell set the bag on the desk. "Yes," he finally said.

"Any reason she might have been in Southie?"

"I was just trying to figure that out," Lovell said. "We don't know anyone there."

Duncan made his mouth impossibly small and clapped his hands together. "One of the girls at the flower store? Hannah called her to say she was running late for work because Janine was home sick."

"Janine wasn't home sick," Lovell said.

"We know. Hannah made the call from Boston," the detective said. "You look a little sick yourself, Mr. Hall."

Lovell blinked. "Lovell, please just call me Lovell. I have no idea where my wife is right now. I'm standing here in a police station identifying her bracelet. Yes, I don't feel so good. Do you have people searching South Boston?"

"Can you give me your best guess why Hannah might have driven herself to Carson Beach?"

“I honestly—I’m telling the truth—I have no idea,” Lovell said. The argument might explain some part of what was going on right now but certainly not everything. “I assume you checked with her sister? Her parents?”

“We did.”

“I know you talked to her friend Sophie. None of them knew anything?”

“Not a thing.” Duncan cleared his throat. “Jeez, you really are tall. I guess Hannah’s tall too for a woman, but not as big as you are.”

Lovell almost wished this man would come out and accuse him of something.

If he admitted that they’d had an explosive exchange the night before she left, if Lovell admitted that Hannah may well be off somewhere planning her next move, deciding whether to even stay married to him, the police would probably halt their search. If they had even begun it. He would rather have them drag her back home to him than leave her alone out there, defeated or pissed off or emotionally raw and vulnerable in some place that might not be all that safe. Maybe he was rationalizing, but there was no other choice.

“Any other insights you can give us?” Duncan asked.

“I guess not,” Lovell finally said.

“Need you to sign this,” the detective said, beginning to shuffle through a stack of papers on his desk. He handed Lovell a ballpoint pen and a clipboard that held a triplicate form onto which his alibi had been typed. He had been at work during the time Hannah disappeared, save the twenty minutes he went out to grab lunch and the brief time later when he had to get something he had left in his car. Lovell signed his name.

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