

Show
Me a
Sign

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inhabitant of our township, Chilmark. I'm not sure why she dislikes him. Papa enjoys his company and stories. I sometimes wonder if his farmer's heart longs for the excitement of the high seas.

"I promise I'll return later to help you," I sign, crossing my fingers behind my back.

As I walk out the door, I think I see Mama call out to me from the corner of my eye. George was hearing like Mama. I am deaf like Papa, and no manner of shouting will get our attention.

I confess I do not turn back.

Chapter

Three

We live up-island. To get to Ezra Brewer's, I walk down the high road toward our pastures. I do not see Papa or our herding dog, Sam. They must be back at the barn.

Our sheep farm sits on rolling meadows bounded by stone walls. From the high road to the Atlantic Ocean beyond, Chilmark is a hilly place. I sign, "Good morrow, sheep." They barely look up.

Our grazing pastures are part of the much larger Allen farm. With permission from the colonial government, the local sachem sold it to them in 1762. The Allens have rented the land to the Lamberts for generations.

I pass the timber-framed barn that Papa's father built. It has large tubs for sheep dipping and space for sheep shearing. In two small, adjacent buildings there is a very old corncrib for storing dried ears of corn, and a stone peat house, where rotting vegetation for conditioning the land is stored.

When I reach the hallowed ground on the high road, memories come rolling in like dark clouds.

My brother, George, and I are in the road. We are laughing. He is chasing me in circles, grabbing for a tool in my hand.

Clouds drift past the sun. I look up, shading my eyes with one hand when George slips the tool out from my other. I look directly into his face. He is smiling.

But then he pushes me hard. I am surprised by the force of his attack. I land facedown in the dirt with a thud. Then I see the flash of wheels.

They are fine wheels, black with gold trim. They spin fast. Toward George. Before he can do anything, one cracks, and George disappears underneath. I scream a scream I cannot hear.

I look up to see the horse's wild eyes. Even with the bit in its mouth, it seems to be squealing. It bridles, spooked. Where's George?

The horse cart swerves and comes to a halt, and that's when I see him. I scramble to my brother.

The driver hops off his seat and runs to George.

George's eyes are open. His lips smeared with blood. His chest still.