

promises I made and meant and broke

In this chapter, the narrator experiences the immediate aftermath of Lark's tragic incident. An ambulance driver, previously familiar to him, arrives, and upon recognizing each other, he expresses his sympathy. The arrival of the police disrupts the moment, as they interrogate the narrator, initially suspecting him of foul play. They direct their accusatory questions toward the timeline of events, the nature of his marriage, and past disputes, while he remains composed, insisting on their happiness and providing an alibi involving a lost dog search. The detective's demeanor shifts when the mention of Kellan, a man who harbors fears and secrets, is brought up, particularly concerning a threatening figure named Werryck.

As the investigation ends for the night, the lead investigator warns the narrator about harboring a fugitive, setting the stage for ongoing scrutiny. In the wake of these tense exchanges, Maudie, a friend, comforts the narrator, offering him refuge in her home. Despite her kindness and the support from others, he struggles with insomnia, haunted by haunting memories of Lark. During this time of grief, he discovers a bloodied dog, Vixen, and tends to her injuries, finding companionship in her presence.

As days bleed into one another, the narrator becomes increasingly withdrawn, relying on friends who attempt to help, but their kindness feels suffocating. The weight of Lark's absence permeates his existence, affecting his sense of purpose and stability. He reflects on her absence in their home filled with her belongings, feeling an overwhelming sense of loss and an urgent desire to remember her fully.

A pivotal moment occurs as the narrator finds himself in the attic, confronting remnants of Kellan's past. Despite the turmoil, he experiments with deep breaths from a mask and regulator, grappling with despair. As summer transitions into fall, he isolates himself in a nearby woodlot, where he forms connections with nature and animals. However, a powerful memory of Lark resurfaces, leading him to reminisce about a shared boat trip—a memory he had nearly forgotten—driving him to the boat shed, where he approaches the vessel that symbolizes their past together, lost in the echoes of absence and yearning.