

*NEW 5/21

ACT ONE

"LAUREN"

ESTABLISHING:

Various images of Washington D.C. circa 1942. We end on the DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE BUILDING.

Then a sign that reads:

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Sc. 1

INT. DOJ HEADQUARTERS - FBI - SAC'S OFFICE - MORNING

HORIZON

Lauren perches at an oversized desk, hemmed in with bristling office equipment. Typewriter, dictaphone, coded tape puncher... a calculator that's twice the size of your laptop.

This is high tech, circa 1942. It looks tortuous, but Lauren moves through it like a fighter pilot mid-dogfight.

A framed picture of GEORGE HOWL is squeezed in amongst the intimidating machinery.

Lauren types at light speed, not even stopping when she talks to Sparks.

Sparks sprawls in the visitor's chair across from her, a GRAPH PAPER NOTEBOOK open in his lap.

→
START

LAUREN

I still think it's a cipher, but I'm just a secretary. What do I know?

SPARKS

Lauren Howl, since when has being "just a secretary" ever stopped you from meddling in a case?

LAUREN

I never meddle.

SPARKS

Ha!

LAUREN

Hey, you came to me, Agent Sparkman. You can always go belly ache to someone else.

SPARKS

I do not belly ache.

LAUREN

Ha!

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Sparks scrubs at his face, frustrated.

SPARKS

Harris is convinced the tractors are destroyers and the plows are subs.

Lauren reaches across the desk, snags his notebook. Reads.

LAUREN

Which would mean there are 24 Jerry U-boats in the Potomac and the Navy just hasn't noticed?

SPARKS

I didn't say Harris was right.

LAUREN

Harris is never right.

SPARKS

But if he's wrong, where's the code?
(shaking his head)

~~If Esman is communicating with the Nazi's, he's using these invoices.~~ We already ran the inventory numbers and--

LAUREN

SHHHH.

SPARKS

Did you just shush me?

LAUREN

Yes! I've almost... it's the prices.

SPARKS

Huh?

LAUREN

String them together and have the girls in crypto run it. Bet you dinner at Holly's that's your code.

Sparks grabs the notebook back. Stares at it, brow furrowed.

SPARKS

Why do you--

LAUREN

Steel prices have gone up, but you'd have to be crazy to pay this much... unless you were a spy, and this was a code.

3/6

SPARKS

I don't know.

LAUREN

That's because you didn't spend high school making time with your future husband in his dad's machine shop.

Thoroughly distracted by the mental image...

SPARKS

Making time... In a machine shop?

LAUREN

Uncomfortable. And greasy. But that isn't the point. The point is I'm right. Run it, you'll see.

SPARKS

Maybe I will.

LAUREN

Maybe you should.

SPARKS

Maybe you should bail out on the paperwork and come with me to crypto.

Lauren grins. She loves winning.

LAUREN

Give me five minutes and--

ELLEN (O.S.)

Lauren, I need to talk to you.

Ellen enters, shuts the door behind her.

Usually, Ellen has a grand champion poker face and enjoys using it to her advantage. Today, she's fighting tears.

LAUREN

Ellen, what's wrong? Did something...

Ellen answers her question by holding up a distinctive MILITARY DEATH NOTIFICATION TELEGRAM.

Catching on quicker than Lauren--

SPARKS

Oh. Christ.

4/6

LAUREN
 (oblivious)
 That's the fourth one this week! Thank
 goodness you're pals with Betty over
 in Notifications. Can you imagine--

ELLEN
 Lauren...

LAUREN
 Whose is it, anyway?

Ellen still can't bring herself to say it. Her eyes dart to
 the picture of George on Lauren's desk instead.

Lauren finally catches on.

LAUREN (CONT'D)
 No. That isn't for me.

Ellen exchanges a helpless look with Sparks.

LAUREN (CONT'D)
 Don't make that face. That isn't mine.
 (desperate)
 Ellen. Please.
 (tears welling)
 Tell me George isn't dead.

-STOP

But Ellen can't do that, and they all know it.

EXT. JOE MCNEIL'S CAR - NIGHT

A 1939 Plymouth's toothy grill and boxy headlights punch
 through the darkness as it growls up a twisting, wooded road.

JOE (O.S.)
 You two must be hungry.

MARLEY (O.S.)
 No. We aren't.

JOE (O.S.)
 I'm sure your brother is hungry,
 Marley.

MARLEY (O.S.)
 No. He's isn't.

INT. JOE MCNEIL'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

JOSEPH MCNEIL, mid 30s, struggles to remain calm and parent
 like as he guides the car through the thick darkness.

5/6

INT. MCNEIL HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Joe pulls the front door open... and finds Lauren Howl standing on the other side.

EXT. MCNEIL HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - CONTINUOUS

Sc. 2

Lauren is nervous, determined... and standing right in a Nazi spy's cross hairs.

Max is crouched against the side of the house, watching her. Silently cursing his luck.

BACK UP ON THE PORCH: Joe doesn't recognizing Lauren--

→
START

JOE

Can I help you?

Lauren freezes up. Deer in the headlights. This seemed like a better idea, back at Holly's.

JOE (CONT'D)

Sorry, honey. If you're selling something--

LAUREN

I'm not selling anything! I, um... I work for the FBI and I had a few questions and--

JOE

You work for the FBI?

LAUREN

Yes. I do. I--

Joe shakes his head, exhaustion and humiliation flashing over into anger.

JOE

WEEKS of begging you people for help and they send what, a secretary?

LAUREN

Well, they didn't actually send me.

Joe slams the door in her face.

Max breathes a sigh of relief. Surely now she'll leave and he can go about his murderous business.

Sorry, Max. No such luck.

Lauren knocks again. Joe throws the door open, eyes flashing.

6/6

JOE

Listen, sister. You may think it's a good laugh to "investigate" the crazy fellow who saw spacemen, but this is my **life**.

LAUREN

I know, Mr. McNeil. And I won't bother you again. I swear. I just needed to say... I'm sorry I disturbed you, but I needed to tell you...

Joe blows out an exasperated sigh, temper cooling.

JOE

Just spit it out, kid.

LAUREN

It's real. The plane that took your daughter. I know it's real.

That gets his attention.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

And I'm going to figure out what it is. I thought you'd want to know.

(beat)

That's all.

She turns and clips down the drive towards her car.

Joe goes to close the door.

Max tightens his grip on his gun. Ready to move the moment she's out of sight.

Then Joe changes his mind. Calling after her...

JOE

Why are you doing this?

LAUREN

Because they took someone I love too. — STOP

That was the last thing Joe, or Max, expected to hear.

A long, silent beat. Then --

JOE

Do you want to see it?

END OF ACT FIVE