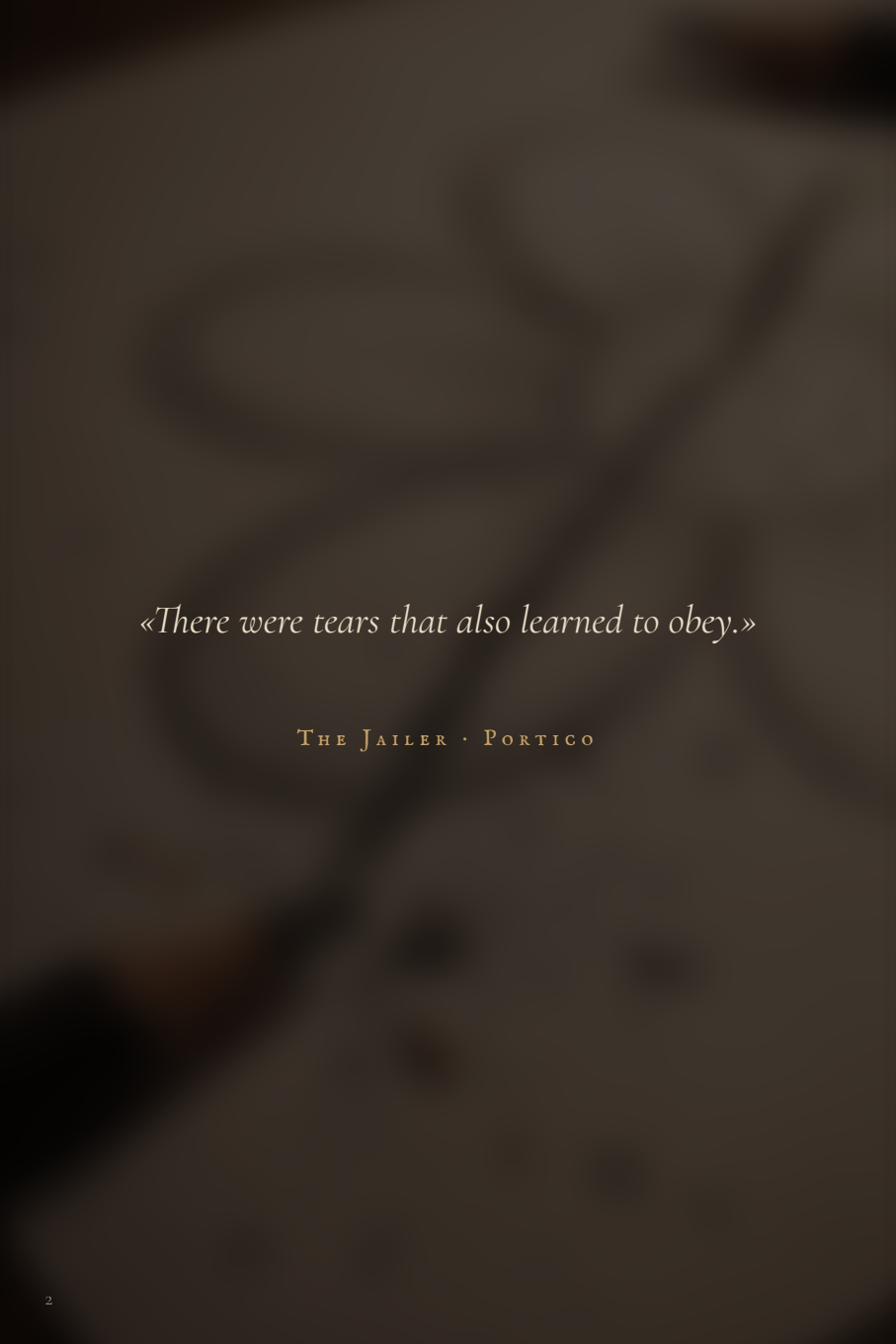

SOPHIA'S STORY · I
BLOHER
SOPHIA
she deciphers what others ignore



«There were tears that also learned to obey.»

The Jailer · Portico



I

The girl

the Portico

The girl who drew flowers

A girl of six or seven draws flowers in pencil under a low yellow light.

Somewhere in the house a door closes. Footsteps in the hallway. Her bedroom door has no latch: in that house, the father decides when doors are closed.

She presses the pencil until the tip snaps. A tear falls on the drawing. Years later, that girl will wake at three in the morning in another city, with a nameless question resting on her chest.





The broken tip on the petal



II

The crack

a nameless question

Sophia

Twenty-seven. A biologist specialising in behaviour, a research analyst at a biotech company. Alarm at 6:42.

She passes for normal. She built her public morality with a goldsmith's care: a real feminist, an atheist, the kind who signs petitions and goes to marches.

In her there is a crack that never quite closes. Through it come the questions people avoid: why there is evil, why the good lose, whether the world was made badly or made this way on purpose.



From inside, the prison looks like a home

One morning she sits on a park bench, without her phone, and watches bodies react before the mind does.

She thinks of parasites that steer their hosts. The mind believed it owned the house; it was only the one narrating it.

In the revolving door at work she does not recognise her own reflection.



The father

Her father died of cancer when she was twenty-two. What he did to her as a child was never spoken of: it stayed in a silent ledger.

In the hospital he said: “If these things happen, someone lets them happen.”

One night, alone on the sofa, Sophia aims the question upward, out loud: “Why are we like this?”





III

Someone

the old man's dream

The man in the top hat

She dreams of a space without edges, lit like an oil lamp. A tall man, his back to her, in a worn top hat, works with long white hands.

“You came.” “The perfect does not complain.” “I made them this way because this way they are entertaining.”

She wakes at 4:17 and writes a single word in her black notebook: “Someone.” Months later, in a bout of sleep paralysis, the figure stands at the foot of her bed.





IV

The search

one book leads to another

The papers

Between two books on her shelves she finds an envelope in her own handwriting: “To read when I have time.” Inside, notes on a nineteenth-century book about a craftsman who makes conscious beings to bear his eternity.

Mary, an old university friend, a believer and a reader of old books, gives her the lead: a nameless library on Eleventh Street, green door, run by “a difficult man”.

The library on Eleventh Street

Romeo does not lend books, allows no photos and will not help anyone search. “I don't own the contents. I own the walls.”

When she stops looking, the book turns up behind an atlas. She reads it for months. In her notebook: “This is not a book. It is a declaration.”

A note in French points to a greater work: Les Litanies Arcanes, the Arcane Litanies. To track it down, Sophia hires Thomas, a forgotten journalist.



Romeo, keeper of the library on Eleventh Street







V

Arcane Litanies

the spiral library

ELI WARD

El filtrador que descubre que la realidad fue editada

The manuscript

They trace it to a library in Chengdu. She is granted two reading sessions: no photos, no loans, a dictionary from the desk.

The manuscript, in old French, speaks of the Craftsman and of the five prisons of the self: body, history, family, morality and name.

In the second session she swaps the manuscript's pages for those of a cheap book and walks out with it. No one notices.



Eli

On the library stairs she bumped into a man: she was going down, he was coming up. Her papers fell, and he saw a sheet that said DOME.

The next day they meet again by chance at the train station and talk in a café. On his face he has a mark shaped like a four-pointed star.

Later they talk through a faceless channel, Edge Archive, and he invents a language of keys for her. One day he stops writing.





VI

The box

and the new chain

Sophia's box

So as to stop searching for Eli inside the material, Sophia puts everything in an archive box: the book, the notebooks, the drives, the translations.

One Thursday at five she takes it to Thomas, at the same café as always. The story goes on with him.



The cement

Eli died and passed into the margin. Instead of letting go completely, he entered Sophia's dreams, her bunker, and taught her to let go of her chains: pain, resentment, the questions.

Along the way she fell in love with him. That was the new chain, the only one he could not break for her.

In a dream, Sophia covers a chain with cement. The chain is Eli. On the other side DOME appears, with the four-pointed star on its face, and wags a finger: no. She keeps pouring cement.













«But questions do not disappear. They only change rooms.»

The Jailer, ch. 1

