

The night is pale, humid, with a few begrimed clouds. The moon has hung around so long it's ignored, unremarkable as a thumbtack.

On this July night, the girl soon to be known as Jane enters the village of Graynier.

It has grown since she was here last, though that was too long ago for her to remember. Back then there were only a few hundred people in Graynier.

It had never been one of those quaint New England hamlets, with neat white clapboard houses, town hall and Presbyterian church presiding over a cozy green, a registry spanning back to the Puritans.

Graynier came into being because of the glass factory. Built in 1828 at the foot of Putman Hill, it harnessed the gush of Pontusuck Creek for its great wheel. Workers arrived; their houses sprang up on haphazard dirt lanes. The factory owner's mansion went up. His progeny built a cluster of modest Victorians to face the wooded hills, turning their backs on the working-class neighborhoods, repudiating community. The workers' progeny established shops and took up the better professions, valiantly trying to confer an air of prosperity on the village....But Graynier was built on glass, and everyone felt that impermanence underfoot.

The factory no longer exists.

She remembers so very little, she cannot comment to herself how this and that have changed since the old days. Yet it was her home, this much she knows. That certainty produces in her a wild joy, thrashing like a bird against the curtain of fatigue sweeping over her body.

She wants to know everything, all, and at once.

Better that she does not: too soon for her to know the appalling events of the past. And the future she is rushing toward, sweeping the town's inhabitants along with her in a frightful flood of justice, is also obscured – as it should be.

Some of the people who were present for what happened all those years ago still live here. The one who pushed her from the womb. The one who carried her on his shoulders. The one who taught her arithmetic. The one who kissed her first. The one who fell in love with her. The one she loved instead.

And the one who killed her.

That one is somewhere here: a small life that shimmers and pulses in the night — or so Heaven must see it, for, in spite of that terrible deed, all life is sacred. But her killer would have no more idea of that than a mole snuffling about its starless underworld.

And Heaven would have her be ignorant as well, as she walks into the village of Graynier, in the valley between two hills, under a vapid moon.