

LIP SERVICE RESUME

Garrin Gustave Sax. Norwegian. Both sides of the family. His paternal grandmother, Farmor, used to complain that there was no record of her birth. It wasn't not knowing the date that bothered her—she stayed sixty-two for ten years—as much as not knowing where she had been born that made her angry. “Place,” Farmor always said, “is essential to a family.” She thought she might have been born in Hammerfest, the same fishing town where she grew up, but a house fire had destroyed all family records and Farmor lived her whole life with this uncertainty. Garrin was fascinated with the stories of the fire and Farmor was happy to recount the incident whenever he asked about it. For some reason Garrin never understood, Farmor blamed the fire on the light bulbs in the family living room.

“Hammerfest was the first town in Norway to get electricity,” Farmor explained to Garrin. “People had a difficult time with it.”

“How can you have a hard time with light?” Garrin asked. He went over to the wall and flicked the light switch on and off. It was evening and the sun had stopped making shadows on Farmor's bare white walls.

“They used it too much,” Farmor said. “Especially in the winter when it stays dark for two months. No one even knew what a fuse box was back then. They didn't know that the wiring had to be insulated.”

Garrin closed his eyes and tried to imagine what it would be like to live without the sun.

“But it was summer when I stood on those rocks and watched my parents pour buckets of water on our house,” Farmor said. “I remember I was barefoot and the midnight tide kept washing up cod. A whole school of lost cod. They were dead. Cold and dead up to my ankles.”

“What about the ocean?” Garrin asked. It was getting dark out-