

THE BOOK OF YOU

Wren

Chapter 1

October 2026

"I started looking up"



31 days bound · 116 kept pages

bound in the violet dusk style

Made with ReEnchanted · reenchanted.app

Foreword

A development sample. Wren's October is simulated. The photographs are real and were taken across several years. Photo keeps and Pagewright sheets were added for this sample after the saved nightly braids.

Before I count anything, this: "I decided to actually write in this thing instead of just tapping keep." You gave me that in October 2026. I'm keeping it.

Binding is the least mystical thing I do. It's just refusing to let a month become a rumour.



Near the end, you wrote: "I want to remember that it was a month where I started looking up." I went back to the earlier pages with that beside me. I don't have to guess what you wanted to keep. You told me.

It was a month and I caught it. That's the whole of my claim, and I'm pleased with it.

The Book



The Month's Theme

I started looking up

You wrote: “I want to remember that it was a month where I started looking up.” I’m keeping your words at the front.

Contents

The Almanac

The month's moons, and the nights, scenes and photographs it kept.

The Labyrinth

Where everyone was, and where you were.

The Cast

Who was in the room.

The Days

Each date: what the Labyrinth did, and what you did.

The Month's Tale

The story you read, bound whole, with your choices written in.

What This Month Was

What You Called This Month

Your own words for what you wanted to remember.

What I Noticed

You put these side by side at the end. I went back and found the days they came from.

What Stayed With Me

Your words first. Then the threads I'm keeping from my nightly tellings.

Map the Door Home • a way through the wrong castle

A Threshold of My Own • a door with two sides



OCTOBER 2026

October

2026

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
						
				•	• •	• •
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
						
• •	•	•	•	• •	•	• •
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
						
•	•	•	•	• •	•	•
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
						
• •	•	•	•	• •	•	•
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
						
•	•	•	•	• •	• •	•

• a night braided • a scene read ▪ a photograph kept

31 NIGHTS BRAIDED · 20 SCENES READ · 0 PHOTOGRAPHS KEPT

THE SKY'S FAVORITE TRICKS

I caught the outer weather on 17 days: clear on 8 days, wind on 7 days, cloud on 5 days, and rain on 4 days. Blank sky-days stayed blank; I didn't dress them up from memory.

WHEN THE INK CAME IN

The kept Pages with a clock-mark arrived morning on 17 days, afternoon on 10 days, and evening on 6 days. This is the ink's timetable, not yours; a life keeps plenty I never see.

THE WEEKS

Week 1 · Oct 1 – Oct 7

Strongest night: The month

Week 2 · Oct 8 – Oct 14

Strongest night: Low grey sky

Week 3 · Oct 15 – Oct 21

Strongest night: The river

Week 4 · Oct 22 – Oct 28

Strongest night: A story

Week 5 · Oct 29 – Oct 31

Strongest night: A composite castle

THE STORY, IN THE ORDER YOU MET IT

Oct 2 · A sentence with its coat off

Oct 3 · The wrong way to the classroom

Oct 4 · Sunday Book Jump Club

Oct 4 · One verb

Oct 4 · Every named traveller

Oct 8 · The East Stacks Incident

Oct 10 · The map with room left

Oct 15 · The Man Reading Himself

Oct 18 · Which preparation?

Oct 18 · Supper with a Finished Man

Oct 22 · The Wrong Castle

Oct 29 · The First Nightbound Morning

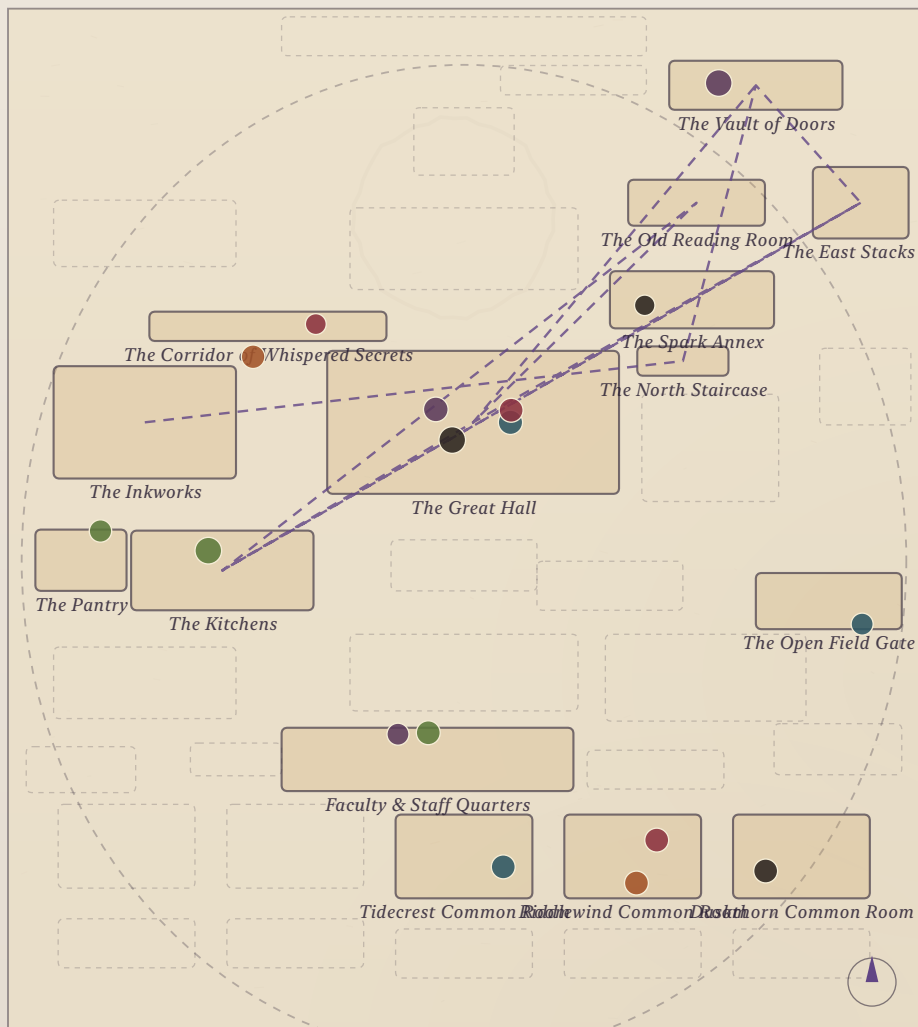
Oct 30 · A Future Tense

Oct 30 · Threshold Protocols



Where everyone was

Drawn from the scenes you read and the Academy's timetable. A room stays blank until the story has been there.



● Serenity Brown · 19 scenes

● Wicker Eddies · 17 scenes

● Ambrose Trencher · 8 scenes

● Penny Blackletter · 17 scenes

● Professor Permancer · 14 scenes

● Soren Ng · 3 scenes

Room by room

Serenity Brown

The Great Hall · Tidecrest Common Room · The Open Field Gate · The Kitchens

Penny Blackletter

The Stacks · Riddlewind Common Room · The Corridor of Whispered Secrets · The Great Hall

Wicker Eddies

The Great Hall · Duskthorn Common Room · The Spark Annex · The Vault of Doors

Professor Permancer

The Vault of Doors · The Great Hall · Faculty & Staff Quarters · The East Stacks

Ambrose Trencher

The Kitchens · Faculty & Staff Quarters · The Pantry · The Great Hall

Soren Ng

Riddlewind Common Room · The Great Hall · The Corridor of Whispered Secrets · The Glint Hall





Serenity Brown

in 19 scenes you read · most often in The Great Hall and Tidecrest Common Room



Penny Blackletter

in 17 scenes you read · most often in The Stacks and Riddlewind Common Room



Wicker Eddies

in 17 scenes you read · most often in The Great Hall and Duskthorn Common Room



Professor Permancer

in 14 scenes you read · most often in The Vault of Doors and The Great Hall

WEEK 1

Oct 1 – Oct 7

THU



FRI



SAT



SUN



MON



TUE



WED

THE WEEK'S STRONGEST NIGHT

The month

THE WEEK, DAY BY DAY

THU 1 The month · Wayfinding

FRI 2 The end piece · A sentence with its coat off · A note · Water at sunrise

SAT 3 Purest form · The wrong way to the classroom · “Attention is the rarest and purest form of generosity.” — Simone Weil

SUN 4 The lamp · Sunday Book Jump Club · Colorful boat galley · Everything Speaks

MON 5 A people · A letter from Zara Finch · Ink-Binding

TUE 6 The Kitchens · A note · The Lighthouse Keeper's Coat

WED 7 A new route · A Quote to Keep · The Marginalia Guild

7 NIGHTS BRAIDED



NIGHT BRAID · KEPT AT 10:00 P.M.

First of the month. You decided to actually write in this thing instead of just tapping keep.

At lunch, you sat beside Serenity's map. She moved its sea away from your sleeve.

Wicker gave Serenity the larger piece of bread. She made land with hers, on his map-bog. I kept the fallen crumbs.

The kettle took forever and you let it. The kettle was in the middle of a sentence, and nobody had told it how the sentence ended.

The light in the hall at eight is the colour of weak tea and you've walked through it every morning for two years without once looking at it.

◆ *I've bet the Index a biscuit about how this ends.*

CLASS

Wayfinding

Wing 2: The Momentum Yard · Professor Stonebrook · 11:00 a.m.

Today the class walked the yard blindfolded, following a thread, and you were the only one who found the end by listening for the knot.

THE SKY THAT DAY

Waning Gibbous

WRITE HERE

Write a sentence you said today with its coat off. Plain, undressed, true.

2

FRIDAY · OCTOBER 2026

● Last Quarter

IN THE ROOM



PROFESSOR



PENNY



SERENITY



WICKER

IN THE LABYRINTH · WING 1: THE INKWORKS

A sentence with its coat off

The Inkworks smells of wet slate and pencil shavings, and it's the only classroom in the Academy where the walls are listening on purpose. You can tell by the plaster. It bulges a little, here and there, like a throat about to say something. Professor Villanelle

→ *The whole scene, as you read it, is chapter I of the Month's Tale.*

NIGHT BRAID · KEPT AT 10:00 P.M.

The end piece

The man at the bakery remembered you like the end piece.

Penny Blackletter left a note: "You looked at the stairs for a long time. I counted."

The Quillquarium splashed a first-year from the far end this morning, uphill, and apologised in bubbles.

The Index wants to see my working for the biscuit bet. I haven't got any working. I've got a feeling.

ILLUMINATED

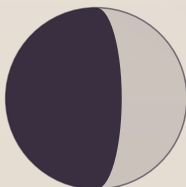


Water at sunrise

PINNED TO THE DAY

o Ink for Today · 9:00 a.m.

THE MOON THAT NIGHT



Last Quarter

64% lit · 21 days old

Late to rise and lit on its other side.

3

SATURDAY · OCTOBER 2026

 Last Quarter

IN THE ROOM



SERENITY



SOREN



WICKER

IN THE LABYRINTH · THE NORTH STAIRCASE

The wrong way to the classroom

Serenity has lost the classroom. She knows exactly where it was. She drew a very good map of it yesterday, with a compass-rose and a small boat. But the North Staircase has taken the map personally, and the corridor outside the Map Room has turned itself, quietly, a quarter-turn to the left.

you chose · "Show us the glass roof."

→ *The whole scene, as you read it, is chapter II of the Month's Tale.*

Thornwave: "They've padded the corners in Book Jumping again. Bring your elbows."

NIGHT BRAID · KEPT AT 10:00 P.M.

I've raised the biscuit bet to two biscuits. The Index is pretending not to be tempted.

You asked Soren to show you the glass roof. He dropped his chalk getting up.

◆ *I nipped the paper bird's tail. It nipped my ribbon back.*

“Attention is the rarest and purest form of generosity.”
— Simone Weil



pressed here, Saturday, October 3

4

SUNDAY · OCTOBER 2026

● Last Quarter

IN THE ROOM



PROFESSOR



WICKER



PENNY



SERENITY

IN THE LABYRINTH · THE VAULT OF DOORS

Sunday Book Jump Club

The Vault of Doors is cold in a way that has nothing to do with weather. It's the cold of a place where a great many exits are being held shut by main force. It's a round room, and everything in it that isn't a door is a lock.

you chose · Enter the supervised jump

you chose · The knot.

you chose · Tell Wicker to cross it out.

→ The whole scene, as you read it, is chapter III of the Month's Tale.

Mothlight Beats: "The listed names are home. The ribbons are tied. The source is shut. Hold on."

NIGHT BRAID · KEPT AT 10:00 P.M.

The lamp

Long walk. You took the path by the water because the main road was loud, and there was a heron standing in the shallows so still that two kids were arguing about whether it was real. The heron stood in the shallows like it had been asked to wait and was determined to do it properly. *It moved its head about an inch and one of them screamed.*

Before entering Dracula, you checked the knot. It tightened beneath your finger.

You told Wicker to cross out his sentence. His nib tore the page, but the words held.

You laughed out loud on your own like an idiot and didn't care. Home by four. *Rain by four-fifteen. Good timing for once.*

◆ *I lost the bet. The Index ate the biscuit in front of me, slowly, with a book open. I'll remember that.*

ILLUMINATED



Colorful boat galley

AN ENCHANTMENT



Everything Speaks

6:00 p.m.

You looked at the brass tap in the hall until it told you the story of every hand that ever turned it, which was mostly impatient.

PINNED TO THE DAY

o Ink for Today · 9:00 a.m.

WRITE HERE

What would you leave on the step for something that visits at night?

NIGHT BRAID · KEPT AT 10:00 P.M.

Professor Permancer's bookmarks hang in a row by the Vault door. Each one lifts when its name is said in the corridor.

A letter came from Zara Finch. "I have been meaning to write, which is a thing people say when they mean they have been avoiding the pen."

✦ *I'm writing a rude letter to the rain, and I'm not going to send it.*

A LETTER FROM ZARA FINCH

A letter from Zara Finch

I have been meaning to write, which is a thing people say when they mean they have been avoiding the pen. The truth is simpler: you were in the corridor on Tuesday, looking at the stair as if it had said something, and I did not ask what. I regret that. So I am asking now, on paper, where I cannot see your face change.

What did it say?

— Zara Finch

You wrote back

Dear Zara, it said nothing, which was the problem. It was the stair by the coat hooks and it has a tread that creaks only on the way down, never up, and I was standing there trying to work out what that means about stairs. I think it means they mind being left more than being climbed. Ask me again on Tuesday.

CLASS

Ink-Binding

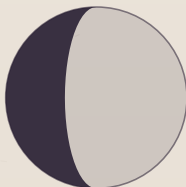
Wing 1: The Inkworks · Professor Villanelle · 11:00 a.m.

A sentence has to be bound before it can leave the page. Yours leaned against the margin and refused to be tied. Villanelle approved.

THE SKY THAT DAY

Last Quarter

THE MOON THAT NIGHT



Last Quarter

33% lit · 24 days old

Thin again, up before dawn for the early ones.

6

TUESDAY · OCTOBER 2026

☾ Waning Crescent · sky clear

Fae-Fí: "Tonight's weather is brought to you by whoever left the window open."

IN YOUR OWN HAND

Inner Weather · 10:00 p.m. — the Page asked, "What word fits today?"

Frayed. Too many emails, and all of them wanted something by Friday.

NIGHT BRAID · KEPT AT 10:00 P.M.

The Kitchens

Tidied the shelf of things you never use at Amanda's. You kept thinking about it on the bus.

The kettle in the Kitchens has opinions about you. Don't ask.

It's raining on the north staircase, softly, and nowhere else.

♦ *I'm counting the stairs slowly, one at a time.*

A STORY THE BOOK TOLD

The Lighthouse Keeper's Coat

There was once a coat that remembered a lighthouse. It hung in a hall where nobody went, and every autumn it grew a little salt on the collar.

On the night the wind came off the water, the coat stood up on its own and walked down the stairs.

Nobody saw it go. The hall has smelled of the sea since.

NIGHT BRAID · KEPT AT 10:00 P.M.

A new route

Tried a new route to work at the library. The library hummed with all the sentences it wasn't allowed to say aloud. It was cloudy, and the moon was a waning crescent.

The guild met in the Corridor of Whispered Secrets. Someone had left a note in a book from 1974: 'Look up.' You added one underneath.

You told Amanda about it later.

Someone has drawn a castle in the margin of every third book in the common room. The ink is fresh and nobody owns the pen.

◆ *My rude letter to the rain is three pages long. Page two is only the word honestly.*

"Why, sometimes I've believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast."

— Lewis Carroll

THE SKY THAT DAY

Waning Crescent · cloud · wind



pressed here, Wednesday, October 7

WEEK 2

Oct 8 – Oct 14

THU



FRI



SAT



SUN



MON



TUE



WED

THE WEEK'S STRONGEST NIGHT

Low grey sky

THE WEEK, DAY BY DAY

THU 8 Low grey sky · The East Stacks Incident · Resonance**FRI 9** The heavy shopping · A Quote to Keep · A note**SAT 10** The toast · The map with room left · A Quote to Keep · Everything's a Haiku**SUN 11** Next door**MON 12** The roofs · A letter from Soren Ng · Boat interior with blue curtain and plant**TUE 13** The singing bird · A Quote to Keep · Basic Enchantments**WED 14** A brass plate · A note

7 NIGHTS BRAIDED



8

THURSDAY · OCTOBER 2026

○ Waning Crescent

IN THE ROOM



SERENITY



WICKER



PENNY



PROFESSOR



AMBROSE

IN THE LABYRINTH · THE EAST STACKS

The East Stacks Incident

A book lands in Ambrose's soup. It comes out of nowhere, from somewhere above the rafters, and it hits the pot with the heavy slap of a very good hardback landing flat. Soup goes up in a brown arc. Everybody in the Kitchens ducks. Ambrose doesn't.

you chose · Move her map nearer.

→ *The whole scene, as you read it, is chapter IV of the Month's Tale.*

NIGHT BRAID · KEPT AT 10:00 P.M.

Low grey sky

Low grey sky sitting right on the roofs like a lid. You like it more than you should. It makes the street feel like a room.

In the East Stacks, you moved Serenity's map within reach. Her hand closed on its edge.

Ambrose carried Serenity to the Kitchens. She kept her map. Wicker held the door; she passed without looking at him. I remembered the aisle.

♦ *I sent the rude letter. I know. Don't look at me. It went out of the window by itself.*

CLASS

Resonance

Wing 3: The Resonance Chamber · Professor Euphony · 11:00 a.m.

You hummed one note until the chamber hummed it back.

Euphony said it was the first honest note this term.

WRITE HERE

Leave a note for the you who finds this book in a year.

9

FRIDAY · OCTOBER 2026

○ New Moon · sky rain

Thornwave: "A word to the wise: the East Stacks are several places. Please use one at a time."

IN YOUR OWN HAND

What the Sky Is Doing · 5:00 p.m. — the Page asked, "What was the sky doing?"

Clear and sharp. My breath showed at the bus stop.

NIGHT BRAID · KEPT AT 10:00 P.M.

The heavy shopping

Carried the heavy shopping up all four flights in the park by the war memorial. Shirley said it was typical of you.

Wicker Eddies left a note: "I didn't leave the pen in your bag. Check the other bag."

The lamps along the corridor to the East Stacks lean away from the door, like people stepping round a puddle.

The rain wrote back to my rude letter. It's one drop on the sill, and it's polite about it.

"Hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul."

— Emily Dickinson

A NOTE FROM WICKER EDDIES

Wicker Eddies: "I did not leave the pen in your bag. Check the other bag."

Your answer

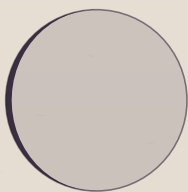
I checked the other bag. It was in the other bag. I am not saying thank you.

ILLUMINATED



Boat cabin window and pictures

THE MOON THAT NIGHT



New Moon

3% lit · 28 days old · sky rain

Thin again, up before dawn for the early ones.

10

SATURDAY · OCTOBER 2026

☉ New Moon · sky clear

IN THE ROOM



SOREN



SERENITY



WICKER



AMBROSE

IN THE LABYRINTH · THE KITCHENS

The map with room left

Soren Ng comes into the Kitchens carrying a roll of tracing paper, the way you'd carry a sleeping animal. It's raining, and he's carefully not dripping on it.

→ *The whole scene, as you read it, is chapter V of the Month's Tale.*

NIGHT BRAID · KEPT AT 10:00 P.M.

The toast

Burned the toast and ate it anyway before breakfast. Your brother would have loved it. *Swapped recipes with the woman from 3B after work.*

You're writing it down so you remember. You want this one on the wall. The light did the thing. I kept this from nine days ago: The light in the hall at eight is the colour of weak tea and you've walked through it every morning for two years without once looking at it.

Something knocks twice on the inside of the East Stacks door at the end of each afternoon, and waits politely to be answered.

♦ *I'm giving everything in the room an opinion.*

*"I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately."
— Henry David Thoreau*

AN ENCHANTMENT

**Everything's a Haiku**

6:00 p.m.

Rain on the bus window
the market closing its doors
your hands, finally warm



pressed here, Saturday, October 10

FROM YOUR SCRAPBOOK

A small floating home

A small floating home

The galley. The window. Things with a place to live.



SOUVENIR

The man at the bakery
remembered I like the end piece

SOUVENIR

Burned the toast and ate it
anyway before breakfast



A small floating home · made at 8:00 p.m.

The galley. The window. Things with a place to live.

IN YOUR OWN HAND

What the Sky Is Doing · 9:00 a.m.

Clear and sharp. My breath showed at the bus stop.

NIGHT BRAID · KEPT AT 10:00 P.M.

Next door

Walked the dog from next door at Amanda's. Small thing. Still counts. It was cloudy, and there was no moon.

For anyone who missed it, and the Bleed has noticed that several readers did: a supervised Jump into Dracula ended early after Wicker Eddies wrote one unauthorized sentence in the source margin. Every listed jumper came home. Count Dracula had crossed out of his book during the return, and he used Serenity Brown to hold himself inside the Academy.

Nothing happened today, which you're writing down because the Book keeps saying nothing is wasted. The book had a spine that remembered every place it had been bent.

So: you did the washing.

You ate toast standing up. You sat on the back step for ten minutes with your coat on and watched next door's cat try to get into the recycling. It failed. It tried again. Respect. You keep thinking about the stair that creaks only on the way down. You tested it tonight. It's true. You don't know why that pleases you so much, but it does.

Ambrose leaves the kitchen door open at night. Whatever comes in never touches the bread, and he finds that worse.

The chair thinks it's too early. The lamp thinks it's too late. The kettle has no opinion and it's smug about it.

NIGHT BRAID · KEPT AT 10:00 P.M.

The roofs

Penny is writing the Bleed with the window shut for the first time this term. Her ink won't dry until someone reads it.

A letter came from Soren Ng. "I have been meaning to write, which is a thing people say when they mean they have been avoiding the pen."

The window has changed its mind about the room. I didn't know windows could.

A LETTER FROM SOREN NG

A letter from Soren Ng

I have been meaning to write, which is a thing people say when they mean they have been avoiding the pen. The truth is simpler: you were in the corridor on Tuesday, looking at the wall as if it had said something, and I did not ask what. I regret that. So I am asking now, on paper, where I cannot see your face change.

What did it say?

— Soren Ng

ILLUMINATED



Boat interior with blue curtain and plant

PINNED TO THE DAY

o Ink for Today · 9:00 a.m.

THE SKY THAT DAY

New Moon · Crowley's Birthday

WRITE HERE

Which chair did you end up in today, and who chose it?

13

TUESDAY · OCTOBER 2026

○ Waxing Crescent · sky rain

Mothlight Beats: "Somewhere a kettle is about to say something. Stay by the stove."

NIGHT BRAID · KEPT AT 10:00 P.M.

The singing bird

Wrote a list and then lost it at the library. It was nearly dark by then. It was raining, and there was no moon.

You chose a doorknob. It answered in a small cold voice.

Everyone asleep but the kettle. The kettle had boiled for people for eleven years and had never once been asked what it thought.

Twelve days ago, it was this: The kettle took forever and you let it.

The bell in the east tower has rung once each night this week, at an hour the clock beneath it doesn't have.

♦ *I asked the door what it thinks of me. It stayed shut. I'm taking that as respect.*

"Keep a green bough in your heart and the singing bird will come."

— Chinese proverb

CLASS

Basic Enchantments

The Still Room · Dr. Vellum · 11:00 a.m.

Exercise: find something ordinary and make it answer. You chose a doorknob. It answered in a small cold voice.

NIGHT BRAID · KEPT AT 10:00 P.M.

A brass plate

The library's back door has a brass plate worn silver in exactly the shape of a thumb.

A door by the north stair has begun to listen. It likes your footsteps.

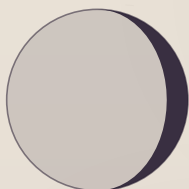
The door to the East Stacks has a notice on it in Professor Per-mancer's handwriting. It was longer yesterday.

♦ *I've hidden one word somewhere in the building, and I'll know by morning if anyone found it.*

THE SKY THAT DAY

Waxing Crescent

THE MOON THAT NIGHT



Waxing Crescent

12% lit · 3 days old

A thin one, low after sunset.

WEEK 3

Oct 15 – Oct 21



THU



FRI



SAT



SUN



MON



TUE



WED

THE WEEK'S STRONGEST NIGHT

The river

THE WEEK, DAY BY DAY

THU 15 The river · The Man Reading Himself · Wayfinding · The Door That Changed Colour

FRI 16 Your lunch break · Woodland cabin window and hanging light · “I celebrate myself, and sing myself.” — Walt Whitman

SAT 17 A bus timetable · Everything's Stories

SUN 18 The window box · Which preparation? · Supper with a Finished Man · Sunlit forest path · Book Jump Club

MON 19 Impossible · A letter from Ambrose Trencher · Old kitchen stove and kettle

TUE 20 The car roof

WED 21 The table · A note · Grey water under a cloudy sky

7 NIGHTS BRAIDED



15

THURSDAY · OCTOBER 2026

☾ Waxing Crescent · sky cloud, wind
Calvino's Birthday

IN THE ROOM



SERENITY



PENNY

IN THE LABYRINTH · THE OLD READING ROOM

The Man Reading Himself

“That one,” says Serenity. She doesn't need the map to say it. She's got it open on her knee, and the black line on it has stopped wandering, and for the first time since the East Stacks it's pointing straight at a door.

you chose · “What would you do with a tomorrow?”

→ *The whole scene, as you read it, is chapter VI of the Month's Tale.*

NIGHT BRAID · KEPT AT 10:00 P.M.

The river

Found a coin with a hole through it by the river. The river had somewhere to be and said so quietly all day.

You asked Dracula what he would do with a tomorrow. He wanted something he had not read; Serenity called that an empty answer.

Dracula wanted a future tense. Serenity said they must learn to send him back. His shadow opened several books, and the black line on her map branched.

You should do that more often.

Somebody moved my hidden word. I know because it's the wrong way up.

CLASS

Wayfinding

Wing 2: The Momentum Yard · Professor Stonebrook · 11:00 a.m.

The class mapped the school by smell. Yours was mostly toast, ink and the inside of old coats.

A STORY THE BOOK TOLD

The Door That Changed Colour

A door at the end of a lane grew tired of being green. It spent a week thinking about blue and a night deciding.

In the morning a woman walked past and stopped, because the door had finally done it, and she was the first to know.

She did not tell anyone. Doors like that.



pressed here, Thursday, October 15

NIGHT BRAID · KEPT AT 10:00 P.M.

Your lunch break

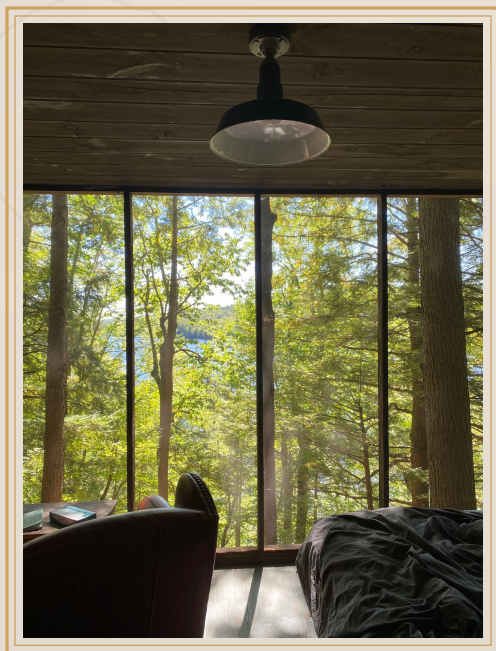
H heard someone practising the trumpet on your lunch break. It was colder than it looked. Ironed a shirt for no reason on the way home. Nobody else noticed. Hard day.

You won't write all of it. You called your brother and you talked about nothing for forty minutes, which was the point. When you hung up the flat was very quiet and you put the radio on just to have someone else in the room. It was a programme about bees. You listened to the whole thing. That came back from eight days ago: It makes the street feel like a room.

Wicker is quieter this week, and keeps his pencils in his pocket.

◆ *I've left the window open a crack, in case.*

ILLUMINATED



Woodland cabin window and hanging light

"I celebrate myself, and sing myself."

— Walt Whitman

PINNED TO THE DAY

o Ink for Today · 9:00 a.m.

THE SKY THAT DAY

Waxing Crescent · clear · wind · Wilde's Birthday

WRITE HERE

Write a sentence you said today with its coat off. Plain, undressed, true.

17

SATURDAY · OCTOBER 2026

 First Quarter · sky rain

Fae-Fí: "This next one goes out to everyone who changed a colour this week."

NIGHT BRAID · KEPT AT 10:00 P.M.

A bus timetable

Helped a stranger read a bus timetable while the kettle boiled. You nearly missed it. Changed the bulb in the bathroom on the top deck of the bus. You didn't take a photo, on purpose. Sixteen days ago, it was this: The kettle took forever and you let it. It was raining, and the moon was at its first quarter.

The man with the ladder had been a lighthouse keeper once, in another life, and still looked up at ceilings as if expecting ships.

The East Stacks are shut. Serenity's awake in the Kitchens. I've kept a place for her map; it keeps moving when nobody touches it.

♦ *I've decided to be pleased about my hidden word being moved. It means somebody's reading the building.*

AN ENCHANTMENT



Everything's Stories

6:00 p.m.

The man with the ladder had been a lighthouse keeper once, in another life, and still looked up at ceilings as if expecting ships.

18

SUNDAY · OCTOBER 2026

● First Quarter · sky clear

Double Ninth Festival

IN THE ROOM



SERENITY



WICKER



PENNY



PROFESSOR



AMBROSE

IN THE LABYRINTH · THE GREAT HALL

Which preparation?

It's the night before the night. Everyone in the Great Hall can feel it. The stair's still there between the supper tables, and the torches along the walls have started to lean toward it, and the benches are half empty, as if half the school has decided to be elsewhere.

you chose · Supper with a Finished Man

you chose · The Academy must admit what it did.

→ *The whole scene, as you read it, is chapter VII of the Month's Tale.*

NIGHT BRAID · KEPT AT 10:00 P.M.

The window box

At lunch on a bench facing the wrong way in the rain. Your hands smelled of it all evening.

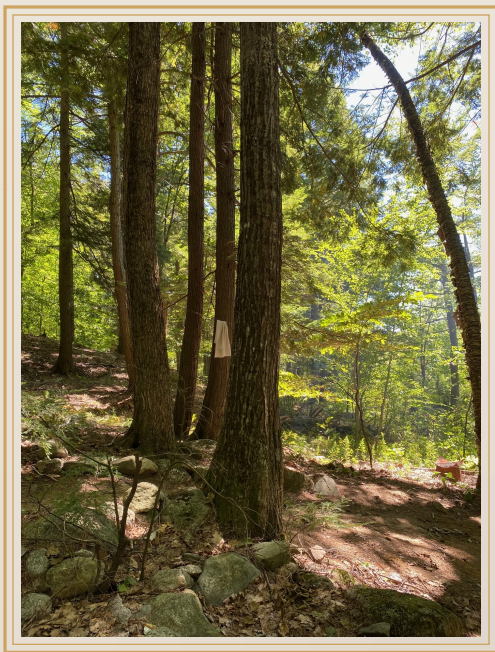
You went to supper with a finished man. I kept my ribbon out of the soup.

At supper, you asked for the Academy to admit what it did. Ambrose wrote that the door was opened and its return wrongly called safe. He left a space for Permancer to sign.

Planted garlic in the window box in the hallway. The box held the shape of what had been in it for a week after. That was the best part of the day. Untangled a necklace for twenty minutes in the park by the war memorial. The light was doing something odd. The blue door, 7:52 a.m.

◆ *My hidden word came back with another word stuck to it. Now there are two. I don't know whose is whose.*

ILLUMINATED



Sunlit forest path

CLUB

**Book Jump Club**

7:00 p.m.

The club jumped into a short story about a lighthouse. You came back with salt on your sleeve and a line you could not stop saying.

NIGHT BRAID · KEPT AT 10:00 P.M.

Gave the plant by the window a new pot at the diner. It took three tries. Watched rain run down the bus window at the market. You kept thinking about it on the bus. It was cloudy, and the moon was at its first quarter.

A letter came from Ambrose Trencher. “I have been meaning to write, which is a thing people say when they mean they have been avoiding the pen.”

The Vault of Doors put up a new door overnight. It looks like the others and opens onto the same hallway, only later in the day.

♦ *I'm waiting for something to knock, so I can pretend to be out.*

A LETTER FROM AMBROSE TRENCHER

A letter from Ambrose Trencher

I have been meaning to write, which is a thing people say when they mean they have been avoiding the pen. The truth is simpler: you were in the corridor on Tuesday, looking at the lamp as if it had said something, and I did not ask what. I regret that. So I am asking now, on paper, where I cannot see your face change.

What did it say?

— Ambrose Trencher

You wrote back

Ambrose. It said the soup was too salty. It was right. I added water, like you would have, and then I stood in the kitchen for a long time with the spoon, not eating, just being somewhere warm. That is the honest answer.

ILLUMINATED



Old kitchen stove and kettle

THE SKY THAT DAY

First Quarter · cloud · wind

THE MOON THAT NIGHT



First Quarter

60% lit · 8 days old · sky cloud

Fattening. Up in the afternoon, if anyone looked.

20

TUESDAY · OCTOBER 2026

● Waxing Gibbous

Thornwave: "Doors are listening again. Speak kindly, and then speak up."

NIGHT BRAID · KEPT AT 10:00 P.M.

The car roof

Frost on the car roof in the shape of a map of somewhere that doesn't exist. I kept this from six days ago: The library's back door has a brass plate worn silver in exactly the shape of a thumb.

The East Stacks are shut, and every morning there are damp cloths outside the door, as if someone had been dusting.

♦ *I've lost track of a Tuesday.*



pressed here, Tuesday, October 20

FROM YOUR SCRAPBOOK

Room for the light

Room for the light

A blue curtain, a little lamp, and somewhere to put a book.

Keep the lamp
onWANDER & RECORD
A note for
future me.

WEATHER

Low grey sky sitting
right on the roofs like a
lid

Room for the light · made at 8:00 p.m.

A blue curtain, a little lamp, and somewhere to put a book.

NIGHT BRAID · KEPT AT 10:00 P.M.

Professor Villanelle has started every lesson this week by asking the class to put their pens down and listen to the walls.

Your handwriting got braver this week. Don't tell anyone I said so.

◆ *I've looked behind the shelves, under the stairs and in the teapot.
No Tuesday.*

ILLUMINATED



Grey water under a cloudy sky

PINNED TO THE DAY

○ *Ink for Today · 9:00 a.m.*



WEEK 4

Oct 22 – Oct 28

THU



FRI



SAT



SUN



MON



TUE



WED

THE WEEK'S STRONGEST NIGHT

A story

THE WEEK, DAY BY DAY

THU 22 A story · The Wrong Castle · Everything ordinary is on its way to being a story. · The Glint

FRI 23 The bakery · Mirror, Mirror

SAT 24 The post box · A note · Two-person portrait at the waterfront

SUN 25 The river · Quiet Hours

MON 26 A new route · A letter from Penny Blackletter · Person holding a rabbit

TUE 27 Same window · Two-person portrait by the sea at sunset

WED 28 A Quiet Night · The Compass Society

7 NIGHTS BRAIDED



22

THURSDAY · OCTOBER 2026

● Waxing Gibbous · sky clear

IN THE ROOM



SERENITY



WICKER



PENNY



PROFESSOR

IN THE LABYRINTH · THE EAST STACKS

The Wrong Castle

The East Stacks grow a tower overnight. You can see it from the Great Hall windows when the morning mist comes off: a thick dark finger standing where the library's east wing used to end. The bottom of it is library. It's got the right stone, the right narrow windows, the right smell of old glue.

you chose · The ballroom.

→ *The whole scene, as you read it, is chapter VIII of the Month's Tale.*

NIGHT BRAID · KEPT AT 10:00 P.M.

Bought flowers for no one in particular before breakfast. It was nearly dark by then. Five kinds of yellow on one street. That came back from fourteen days ago: It makes the street feel like a room.

You crossed the ballroom to a beat you could follow. Empty coats swept past.

In the borrowed castle, Penny named source, invitation, and living claim. Serenity put her hand over the third card. That one was hers.

Penny says Tuesdays don't get lost, they get borrowed. I'd like to know by who.

“Everything ordinary is on its way to being a story.”

CLASS

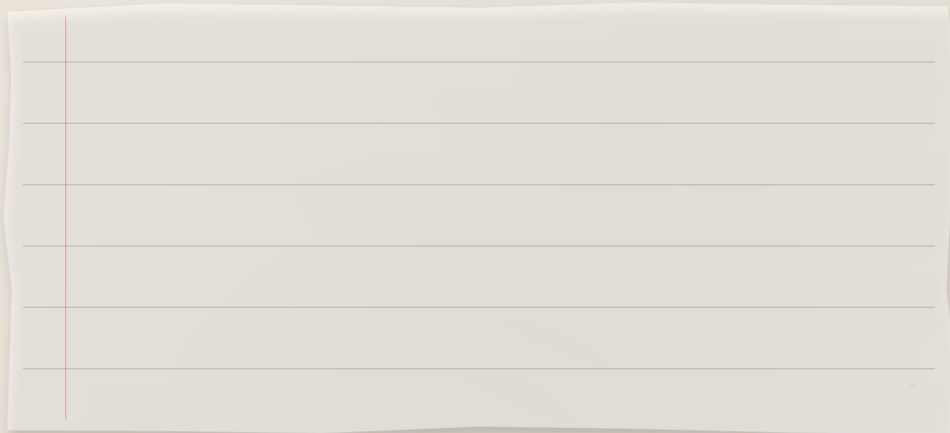
The Glint

Wing 4: The Glint Hall · Professor Wispwood · 11:00 a.m.

Light, today, in the form of one stubborn lamp. You were asked to make it say something kind. It said 'later'.

WRITE HERE

What would you leave on the step for something that visits at night?



NIGHT BRAID · KEPT AT 10:00 P.M.

The bakery

Learned the name of the bakery cat after work. It rained again right after. You tried the thing from the Wayfinding class, mapping the street by smell, on the way home.

The mirror said you looked like someone who had been listening to a long story and had just reached the good part.

Bakery, then the laundrette (hot cotton), then the bins behind the chip shop, then nothing for a long stretch, then woodsmoke from somebody's chimney two roads over. You'd never have noticed the woodsmoke if you hadn't been playing. You stood at the corner for a while just breathing it in like a weirdo. You think that's what this whole Book is for, honestly. Making you stand on corners. That came back from twenty-one days ago: The man at the bakery remembered you like the end piece.

The corridor outside the Vault has two ceilings now. The upper one has weather.

Found the lost Tuesday. It was folded into eight in my back cover, with a crumb in it. I've put it back on the calendar. It looks tired.

AN ENCHANTMENT



Mirror, Mirror

6:00 p.m.

The mirror said you looked like someone who had been listening to a long story and had just reached the good part.

THE MOON THAT NIGHT



Waxing Gibbous

93% lit · 12 days old · sky cloud

Fattening. Up in the afternoon, if anyone looked.

24

SATURDAY · OCTOBER 2026

● Full Moon · sky clear, wind

Mothlight Beats: "Last call for the long way home."

NIGHT BRAID · KEPT AT 10:00 P.M.

The post box

Oiled the squeaky kitchen door late at night. The kitchen smelled of three different days at once and was fond of all of them.

The kettle had been working up to it for years. Tuesday, it said, in a small steam voice, and nothing else. So on Tuesday nothing was done about anything, and it was a very good day.

Shirley said it was typical of you. Counted the steps to the post box at Amanda's. Nobody else noticed. The river, going gold.

I've caught a loose moon in my ribbon. It's heavier than it looks, and it hums.

♦ *I'm writing a dragon into the margin. A small one.*

A NOTE FROM SERENITY BROWN

Serenity Brown: "Somebody should have taught you to read a map backwards. I volunteer."

ILLUMINATED



Two-person portrait at the waterfront

A STORY THE BOOK TOLD

What the Kettle Said

The kettle had been working up to it for years. Tuesday, it said, in a small steam voice, and nothing else.

So on Tuesday nothing was done about anything, and it was a very good day.



pressed here, Saturday, October 24

FROM YOUR SCRAPBOOK

Outside, slowly

Outside, slowly

Water and the way through the trees. I wanted both.

JOURNAL

the river, going gold



SOUVENIR

Frost on the car roof in the shape of a map of somewhere that doesn't exist

*Outside, slowly · made at 8:00 p.m.**water and the way through the trees. I wanted both.*

IN YOUR OWN HAND

Ink for Today · 9:00 a.m.

Wore odd socks all day at the library. I laughed out loud on my own.

NIGHT BRAID · KEPT AT 10:00 P.M.

The river

Wore odd socks all day at the library. Sat with Amanda while she waited for news by the river. The radio was playing something old. Tidied the shelf of things you never use on your lunch break. You didn't take a photo, on purpose. I kept this from eighteen days ago: You told Amanda about it later.

If one column gets read this week, make it this one. The Academy has company. A composite castle has grown through the East Stacks, which remain shut.

Rooms that belong in other books stand at the windows and look in.

◆ *Tonight I'm holding the pen steady.*

CLASS

Quiet Hours*The Walled Garden · Professor Momort · 11:00 a.m.*

Ten minutes in the garden with nothing to do. You counted eleven kinds of green and one of grey.

WRITE HERE

A door you went through today. What was on the other side?

NIGHT BRAID · KEPT AT 10:00 P.M.

A new route

Tried a new route to work on the way home. It made you late, which was fine.

A letter came from Penny Blackletter. “I have been meaning to write, which is a thing people say when they mean they have been avoiding the pen.”

The Wrong Castle has put its east wing through the wall of the East Stacks. It apologised in Latin.

The dragon has opinions about the margin. It says it's too narrow. It's right.

A LETTER FROM PENNY BLACKLETTER

A letter from Penny Blackletter

I have been meaning to write, which is a thing people say when they mean they have been avoiding the pen. The truth is simpler: you were in the corridor on Tuesday, looking at the window as if it had said something, and I did not ask what. I regret that. So I am asking now, on paper, where I cannot see your face change.

What did it say?

— Penny Blackletter

ILLUMINATED



Person holding a rabbit

PINNED TO THE DAY

◦ Ink for Today · 9:00 a.m.

THE SKY THAT DAY

Full Moon · clear

THE MOON THAT NIGHT

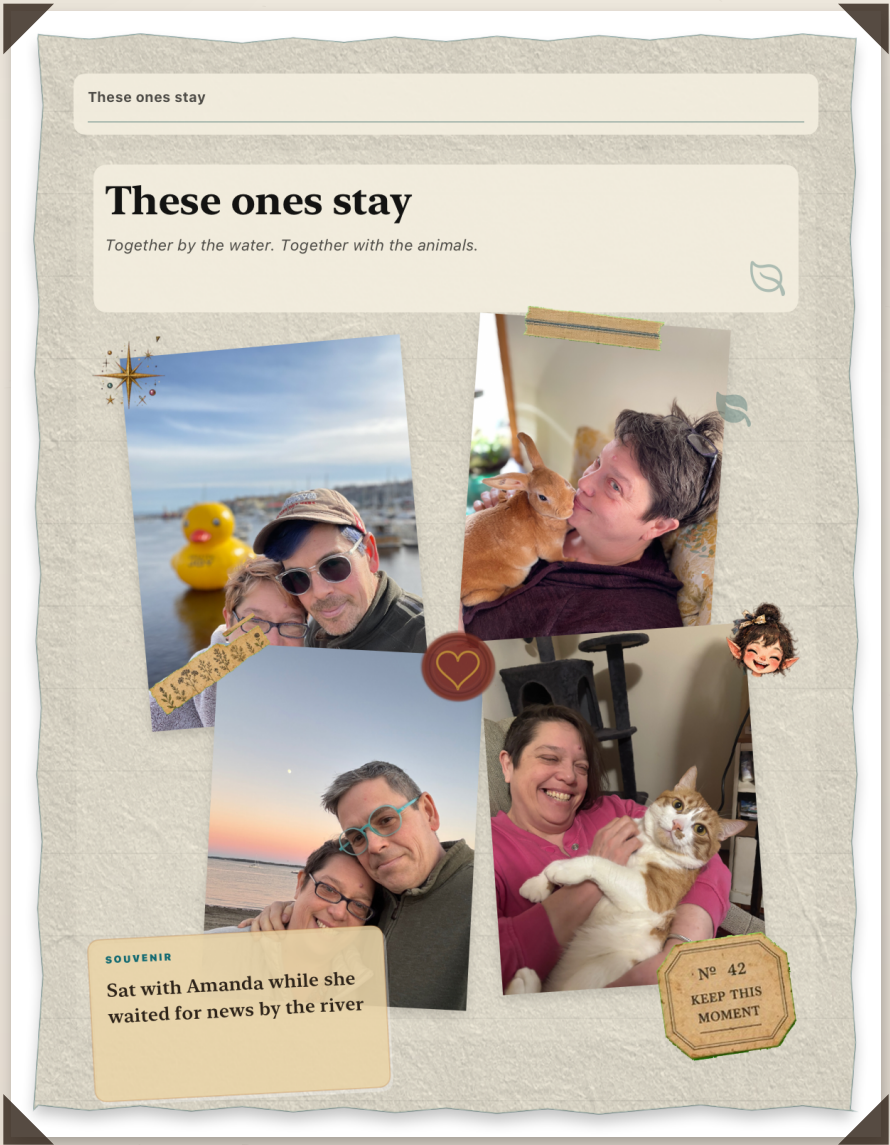


Full Moon

100% lit · 15 days old · sky clear

Full, or near enough to be argued about.

FROM YOUR SCRAPBOOK



These ones stay · made at 8:00 p.m.

Together by the water. Together with the animals.

NIGHT BRAID · KEPT AT 10:00 P.M.

Same window

THAT YOU MISSED writing in here on the two days you didn't.

There's a stair between the supper tables, going up to a hall
nobody was invited to. The soup is warm up there.

◆ *I've given the dragon a bigger margin. It's asked for a window, a
chair and a dry bit of bench.*

ILLUMINATED

*Two-person portrait by the sea at sunset*

WRITE HERE

Write a sentence you said today with its coat off. Plain, undressed, true.

NIGHT BRAID · KEPT AT 10:00 P.M.

A Quiet Night

THE DRAGON'S ASLEEP on the page. I closed the book gently around it. It's snoring in the Index's ear. The Index is being brave. You chose to send the Count back by terms. Ambrose steadied the supper table.

The Count read the terms he had signed and stepped towards the threshold. Serenity still held the living claim.

CLUB



The Compass Society

7:00 p.m.

The society walked the school's perimeter and wrote down everything that had changed since September. Seventeen things. One was you.

THE SKY THAT DAY
Waning Gibbous

WRITE HERE
What would you leave on the step for something that visits at night?

WEEK 5

Oct 29 – Oct 31



THU



FRI



SAT



SUN



MON



TUE



WED

THE WEEK'S STRONGEST NIGHT

A composite castle

THE WEEK, DAY BY DAY

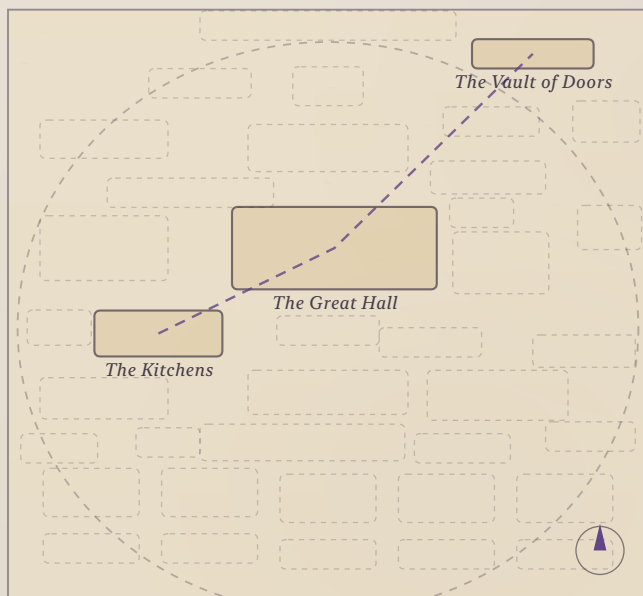
THU 29 A composite castle · The First Nightbound Morning · Everything's Magic

FRI 30 The back step · A Future Tense · Threshold Protocols · Ink-Binding · Person holding a cat

SAT 31 The record

3 NIGHTS BRAIDED

WHERE IT HAPPENED



29

THURSDAY · OCTOBER 2026

● Waning Gibbous

IN THE ROOM



SERENITY PROFESSOR



PENNY



AMBROSE



WICKER

IN THE LABYRINTH · THE KITCHENS

The First Nightbound Morning

Morning finds Serenity in the Kitchens. It's an ordinary morning. That's the astonishing thing about it. The light comes in at the windows in long dusty bars, and the pots hang in their rows like a ship's bells, and the whole room smells of toast and wet wool and last night's soup. Nothing's in the wrong place.

→ *The whole scene, as you read it, is chapter IX of the Month's Tale.*

NIGHT BRAID · KEPT AT 10:00 P.M.

A composite castle

A composite castle has grown through the East Stacks overnight. It's built, in order, of a library, a fortress, and a nursery. The Quillquarium drawbridge is real and closed to visitors.

Serenity chose the word Nightbound. The new notice forbade living anchors. She added: ask before mapping what she can hear. Wicker asked to come in; she said not today, and he left.

♦ *I'm timing how long it takes a candle to forget it's a candle.*

AN ENCHANTMENT



Everything's Magic

6:00 p.m.

In the spice drawer there is a small brown envelope marked only 'for later'. It is the best thing in the flat.

THE MOON THAT NIGHT



Waning Gibbous

87% lit · 18 days old

Late to rise and lit on its other side.

30

FRIDAY · OCTOBER 2026

● Waning Gibbous · sky clear

IN THE ROOM



SERENITY



WICKER



PENNY



PROFESSOR



AMBROSE

THE ACADEMY'S RECORD · THE GREAT HALL

A Future Tense

The Count was returned to his source. Ambrose brought the terms, Permancer opened the book, Penny checked the threshold, and Wicker held the fold. Serenity withdrew the living claim herself. The borrowed rooms fell back into words. The Book lost a stitch holding the source open.

→ *The Academy's record of it is chapter X of the Month's Tale.*

IN THE LABYRINTH · THE VAULT OF DOORS

Threshold Protocols

The Academy opened a door. Someone came through the other way. By the Vault door there's a new notice, in Professor Permancer's small upright hand. It's been written in a single sitting, with a very good pen, and underlined at the bottom with a line so firm it's cut the paper.

→ *The whole scene, as you read it, is chapter XI of the Month's Tale.*

IN YOUR OWN HAND

Ink for Today · 10:00 p.m. — the Page asked, "What happened?"

Last real day of October. I read back through the month on the bus and there's more in it than I thought. The heron. The stair. The bees. The woodsmoke. None of it is anything, and all of it is the month. I want to remember that it was a month where I

started looking up.

NIGHT BRAID · KEPT AT 10:00 P.M.

The back step

Wrote your brother a postcard on the back step. You don't know why it stayed with you. *Last real day of October.* It was clear, and the moon was a waning gibbous.

After Serenity named Nightbound, Permancer posted eight Threshold Protocols in the Vault. Penny kept the old list beside them.

Dracula is back in Dracula. The borrowed rooms have gone home to their books, the stair is a stair in a story again, and the draw-bridge has been returned to the Quillquarium's nibs with an apology and a quantity of ink. Serenity Brown still hears the crossings.

You read back through the month on the bus and there's more in it than you thought. The heron. The stair. The bees. The woodsmoke. None of it's anything, and all of it's the month. You want to remember that it was a month where you started looking up.

◆ *I've got a pocket in my back cover, and I'm filling it with the best words of the day.*

CLASS

Ink-Binding

Wing 1: The Inkworks · Professor Villanelle · 11:00 a.m.

A review of the month's sentences. Villanelle underlined three and wrote 'more of this' beside them.

ILLUMINATED



Person holding a cat



pressed here, Friday, October 30

NIGHT BRAID · KEPT AT 10:00 P.M.

The record

Serenity says she can hear the East Stacks now. It's breathing out, like someone who's put something down.

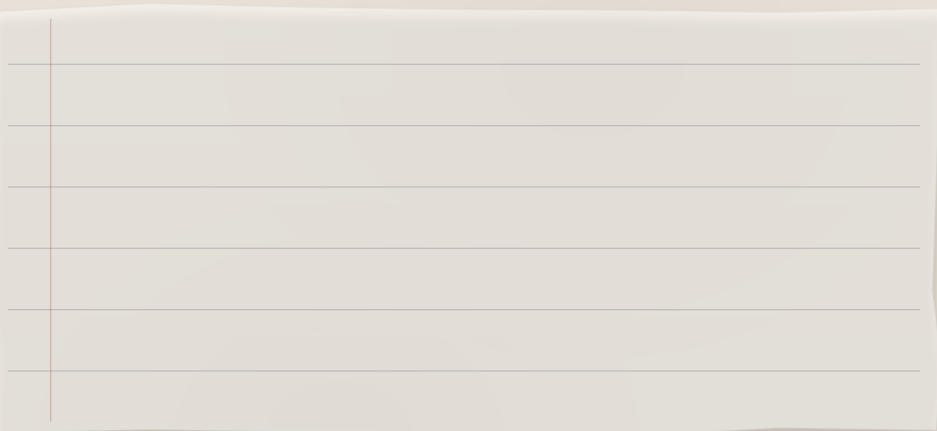
The month, for the record. A Jump went wrong on a Sunday, the Count came out of his book, and the East Stacks shut. A composite castle, a drawbridge and a nursery window moved in.

The pocket in my back cover is getting heavy. Orchard's in there, and nearly, and one excellent sneeze.

THE SKY THAT DAY

Waning Gibbous · Samhain

WRITE HERE

What would you leave on the step for something that visits at night?

PART TWO

The Month's Tale

The story you read this month, bound whole. Where you chose, your choice is written in; where the story borrowed a sentence of yours, it is in your hand.

CHAPTER I

A sentence with its coat off

Read Friday, October 2 · Wing 1: The Inkworks · with Professor Vivian Villanelle, Penny Blackletter, Serenity Brown, and Wicker Eddies



The Inkworks smells of wet slate and pencil shavings, and it's the only classroom in the Academy where the walls are listening on purpose.

You can tell by the plaster. It bulges a little, here and there, like a throat about to say something. Professor Villanelle ignores it. She's standing at the board with a stub of chalk and the expression of a woman who's about to commit a small, necessary murder.

She's written a sentence.

The ineffable splendour of dawn bestowed a profound sense of possibility upon the weary traveller.

Somewhere behind the plaster, something coughs.

It's a modest cough. It's the cough of a sentence that's been wearing a great many words for a great many years and has just noticed the draught.

Villanelle lets us all finish reading. She doesn't hurry people with a sentence. Then she turns, and the chalk goes behind her back like a conjuror's coin.

"What happened?"

Penny Blackletter's hand goes up before the question's finished. She's got ink on her cuff and a catalogue card in her teeth, and she takes the card out to answer.

"Someone got up."

"Where?"

"The sentence hasn't said."

"What did they see?"

Penny looks at the board again. She's thorough. She reads it the way other people check a lock. "It hasn't said that either."

"No," says Villanelle, almost fondly. "It hasn't."

She rubs out *ineffable*. The chalk squeals. It's a thin, high sound, and the plaster behind the board winces. She doesn't stop. She rubs out *splendour*, and *bestowed*, and *profound*, one after another, until what's left on the board is a skeleton with a wristwatch.

"I was at the bus stop," she says. "It was a Tuesday. I had a headache that made the light feel personal. And somebody had left an orange on the bench."

She wipes out what's left, and writes again, in plainer chalk:

There was an orange on the wet bench, bright enough that I nearly missed the bus.

The thing in the wall stops coughing. It lets out a long breath, and for a second the whole room smells, very faintly, of orange peel.

I like the orange. I like it a great deal. I'm a book; I live in sentences, and most of them are standing about in their best coats. This one's standing in the rain with its collar open and it's the only one in the room I'd follow home.

"That's all I'm asking," says Villanelle. "Find the thing that was actually there. Then say it, and stop."

Across the room, Serenity has been writing something of her own. She's got her arm curled round the page, the way you do when you don't want the page to be seen. Wicker, two desks over, has become interested in the ceiling. Then in the window. Then, by a wide and unconvincing arc, in Serenity.

He leans sideways to read.

She puts her hand flat over the page.

"Ask."

"Is it about me?"

"It was about something that needed throwing out." She slides the paper under her elbow. "I can see why you'd be hopeful."

"I'm not hopeful. I'm professionally curious."

"You're sitting on my sleeve."

He is. He moves, not very far.

Villanelle reaches between them. She doesn't say a word. She just takes a fresh sheet of paper off Wicker's desk and sets it in front of him, squarely, like a plate.

"Your turn."

He looks at it. It looks back. It's blank, and a little smug about it. He's a boy who has an answer ready for every insult in the Labyrinth, and the blank page has never been insulted in its life.

For once in his life, it gets the first word.

At the front of the room Villanelle looks, briefly, at you. She doesn't say anything. She taps the board where the orange is, twice, with the end of the chalk, the way you'd tap a door you hope someone will open later.

Not today, the tap says. But you'll have a true one somewhere. Keep an eye

out.

*
**

CHAPTER II

The wrong way to the classroom

Read Saturday, October 3 · The North Staircase · with Serenity Brown, Soren Ng, and Wicker Eddies



Serenity has lost the classroom.

She knows exactly where it was. She drew a very good map of it yesterday, with a compass-rose and a small boat. But the North Staircase has taken the map personally, and the corridor outside the Map Room has turned itself, quietly, a quarter-turn to the left.

“We could ask someone,” I say. Serenity's used to me by now. She doesn't even jump.

“We're almost there.”

We've passed the same boot three times. It's a very good boot, a brown one, laced to the top and abandoned in the exact middle of the floor, and by the third pass it's begun to look confident.

Serenity doesn't stop walking. She walks the way she does everything:

slightly sideways, as if there's a better thing beyond the thing in front of her and she's already half seen it.

On the next windowsill, there's a paper bird.

It's folded from good paper, cream-coloured and thick, with a crisp little tail and two wings held out like a person weighing a decision. There's writing on both wings. Under the left, in small blue letters: *if you want the room*. Under the right: *if you want the long way*.

Serenity picks it up. She turns it over. There's a drawing on its belly, in pencil, so small you'd miss it if you weren't a book. It's her boat. It's got the flag.

"Soren," she says.

She sounds pleased, and then, almost at once, a little cross about sounding pleased. She frowns at the two wings.

"He could have waited for us."

"He didn't want to," I say. "He wanted you to find it."

"That's not the same thing."

"No," I say. "It's better."

She doesn't answer that. She takes the left-hand door.

Soren Ng is sitting on the stair beyond it, three steps up, with a stub of chalk in each hand and an expression that was clearly meant to look accidental. He's got ink-blue cuffs and a patient face. He's the sort of boy who arranges your surprise, steps back, and then pretends to be looking at the ceiling.

"The long way has a glass roof," he says, as if she'd asked.

"You put my boat on a bird."

"It needed to get upstairs."

"It was *my* boat."

"It's a very good boat." He says it plainly, without a joke on it. It lands on her in a way I can see. Noticing that kind of thing is most of what I'm for.

She sits down beside him to look at the fold. He shows her where the paper turns, a crease so slight you'd think the bird had done it itself, and how the whole wing's held up by a single pinch near the shoulder.

Their hands meet there. His waits, and she finishes the fold.

Neither of them says anything about that either. It's turning into a very quiet staircase.

Then Wicker Eddies comes through the classroom door behind them.

It's the classroom. It's right there. It was always right there, at the top of the *other* stair, and he's strolling out of it with his hands in his pockets and a look of mild amusement that has clearly been waiting for an audience.

"How elaborate," he says. He looks at the bird, at the chalk, at the pair of them sitting close together on a step. "Have you tried saying hello?"

"Hello, Wicker," Soren says.

He says it kindly, and that's what gets under Wicker's collar. You can see it go in.

Serenity laughs into the bird.



you chose · "Show us the glass roof."

The glass roof can wait. It's good at that. It's been waiting for the right person since before any of us were bound.

In the bustle of picking up chalk, nobody's watching the windowsill, which is when I do it. I tip myself toward the paper bird, very slightly, and brush the tip of its tail with the end of my ribbon.

The bird nips my ribbon back.

It's a small, sharp, delighted nip, and I've never been so pleased in my life.

When we go in to the lesson, there's a drawing on the corner of Serenity's page that wasn't there this morning. It's a boat. It's got a flag. It's sitting at the foot of a very tall glass staircase, waiting to be asked.

*
**

CHAPTER III

Sunday Book Jump Club

Read Sunday, October 4 · *The Vault of Doors* · with Professor Permancer, Wicker Eddies, Penny Blackletter, and Serenity Brown



The Vault of Doors is cold in a way that has nothing to do with weather. It's the cold of a place where a great many exits are being held shut by main force.

It's a round room, and everything in it that isn't a door is a lock. There are doors of oak and doors of glass; there's a door that's only a drawing of a door, and a door in the ceiling with a tiny ladder leading up to it that's been retired for reasons nobody mentions. Brass handles hang in rows along the walls like hooks in a cloakroom, polished by Sunday. Even the dangerous ones are keeping very still, the way a dog does when it's been told it might come along.

Professor Permancer is kneeling in the middle of the floor with a ribbon.

He's got his sleeves rolled and his tie tucked into his shirt, and he looks exactly like what he is: a man who's spent his whole career putting people into books and has, every single time, brought them back. He lays the ribbon straight across the flagstones.

"This end stays here," he says.

The ribbon crawls toward his shoe.

"*Approximately* here."

It stops. It sulks, in the way of silk.

Let me tell you what's about to happen, because nobody's going to say it plainly, and I think you ought to know.

Every book is a house. Most houses have a door nobody uses, and in a book it's the crease: the narrow seam down the middle where the two halves meet and the pages bend into the dark. If you know the way of it, and have the right sentence, and open the book at the right page and hold it open long enough, that seam isn't a seam. It's a threshold. You can step through into the story, and you'll find it exactly as the author left it, with the furniture in the right places and the weather already decided.

That's a Book Jump. It's the most dangerous lesson at the Academy, and Professor Permancer has taught it every Sunday for eleven years without losing a single student. This is why he's still allowed to teach it.

There are two rules, and he says them both before he lets anybody near the door.

"You don't touch what isn't yours. You don't accept anything you're offered." He holds up two fingers. "The people in the book aren't props. They live there. We're guests, and guests behave."

Then he shows us the ribbon.

It's a long, thin, ordinary ribbon, the colour of old claret, and one end of it's knotted into his bookmark. That's where it's anchored. That's the Vault's end, and it stays here, in this cold room, tied to the one thing in the building that's never been lost.

"A person walks through the crease," he says, "and the ribbon pays out behind them. It doesn't snag. It doesn't tangle. It doesn't leave. When it's time to come home, you take hold of it and follow it back, hand over hand, and it leads you out the exact way you came in. You don't use any other way. You don't take shortcuts. Your ribbon *is* the way home."

He makes a loop and passes the free end through it. Then he does it

again, slowly, so we can all see his fingers.

Penny copies him on the first try, and then does it again to be sure. Wicker Eddies produces something that's technically a knot and has caught his thumb in it, and he stands there with his hand held up and an expression of immense dignity until Permancer reaches over and frees him without a word.

Now, something about *your* ribbon. It's tied to me.

I'm not being sentimental. It's a practical decision. The way home has to be fastened to something that won't be left behind, and a book that someone's carrying is the one object a traveller will never put down by accident. So Permancer takes the end of your ribbon, which is longer than the others and, I think, the best, and he threads it through my head-band and ties it off at my spine with a knot he checks twice.

I haven't got hands, if you've been wondering. I've got ribbons, and corners, and the great leaning power of my whole cover. I can't *hold* your way home. But I can *be* it, and I'm quite good at that, and I'll tell you if anything pulls.

"For this first visit," I say, to you, "I'm keeping the line. You don't owe me a sentence to find your way home. Some day, if you've kept something real, a thing you really noticed, I can tie your ribbon to *that*, and it will hold better than silk. But not today. Today it's me."

Permancer touches the ribbon where it crosses the floor. A little door opens in the air above the knot, no bigger than a window, and through it I can see his own office: the green lamp, the ink-stained blotter, and a cup of tea he's been looking for since breakfast. He reaches through, takes the cup, and brings his hand back with a small and satisfied sound.

"Now," he says, to the room. "Where was my way home?"

Everyone points at the ribbon.

"Good. Keep looking at it," he says, "whenever there's something more interesting to look at."

That is the hardest part, and there's nobody in the room who knows it yet except him and me.



you chose · Enter the supervised jump

The class gathers by the lectern, where the book lies open under a single lamp.

It's an old copy, black-bound, with a cracked spine and a thumbprint of candle-grease on the title page. *Dracula*, by Bram Stoker. A hundred and thirty years of readers have worn the edges of it soft. It's very, very quiet. I don't like it. It's the quiet of a thing that's listening.

"Roster," Penny murmurs, and takes out the list.

She's the one with the list. That's her whole job, and it's the most important one in the room. She checks it against a second list, and then a third, in a handwriting so small and even it looks printed.

"Permancer. Wicker. Me. You."

"Still no *Dracula*?" Wicker asks.

"He lives there."

"Then he can make the tea."

"We don't accept food," Permancer says, without looking up from his knots. "Or shelter, or conversation, or a chair. We enter by the front door and we walk the hall as far as the first landing. We look at the room. We come back. If you take nothing and ask for nothing and touch nothing, you'll have the most boring afternoon of your life."

"That's what I'm hoping for," says Penny, and writes it down.

I look for Serenity. She's by the Vault door, with her map folded under her arm and her chin up, the way she stands when she's decided to be easy about something she isn't easy about. She doesn't look at the book. She looks at Wicker, once, for a second longer than she means.

"I'll be in the East Stacks if anyone wants me," she says. "Finishing the map. Bring me back something that isn't a bite."

"It's a *lesson*," says Wicker, wounded.

"It's a vampire," says Serenity, and goes.

He watches the door she went through for much too long. Then he turns back and takes up his pen as if nothing's happened, which tells you everything.

Ribbons run from Permancer's bookmark to every name on Penny's list. Each is tied at the far end to the thing the traveller carries, a satchel strap, a button, a cuff. Yours runs to me, and I can feel the whole length of it, a thin cold line running back across the Vault and over the lip of the open book.

Don't pull. I'm holding something at the other end, and I'd like to go on holding it.



you chose · The knot.

One verb

Permancer steps into the book first.

He doesn't go anywhere. That's what you notice. One moment he's a man in a waistcoat with a bookmark in his hand, standing in front of a lectern, and the next the page has tilted a little, the way a table tilts when a child leans on it, and the man in the waistcoat has stopped being at the lectern and become, very gently, a thing that's already inside. Penny goes after him with her list held to her chest like a hymn-book.

Then the ribbon takes you by the hand. I'll say that once, and I'll mean it: it takes *you*, the whole of you, by every nerve. It draws you toward the seam.

Now, the book says. It says it without a voice, just a pressure at the back of every sense you have.

It's like this.

The crease opens, and the first thing it does is *smell*. It smells of cold brass, and of rain in a house with the windows shut, and underneath that of something sweet and old, a smell so far back in the paper that it must have been wine once, or blood, or ink. The Vault falls away and the smell closes round you like a coat.

Then the sound comes up through your feet. It's a long, low, rolling tone, the sound of a page being turned by something the size of a field, and under it you can hear the letters. They're all around you, the words themselves, whispering in their thousands, a dry, rising, rustling noise like a wind going through dead leaves. You can *taste* them. They taste like pencil and cold tea. They taste like the inside of

a drawer.

You're falling, and not downward. You're falling *along*. You're falling the way a sentence goes: left to right, and then down to the next line, and then the next, every word a stair, and your shoes are catching on the *ses* and sliding on the *ls*. The words are racing underneath you in black ranks, thick as a crowd. Capital letters go by like tall men in hats. Commas curl away under your heels. A semicolon opens like a trapdoor and you hear yourself shout, soundlessly, in a colour you've never seen before, a greenish violet, the colour of a bruise on a leaf.

And somewhere behind it all, in the exact centre of the dark, there's a ribbon, thin and red and perfectly steady. It hums. It's the only straight thing in the world. It runs from your hand to my spine and it doesn't waver, not for a second, and so neither do you.

Stone catches your feet.

You land on a floor that's *damp*. That's the first and most surprising thing. It's a cold flagged floor, scoured by ten thousand years of a single winter, and in the half dark ahead of you there's a table.

It's the longest table you've ever seen. It runs into the gloom without troubling to end. A single orange sits at the far side of it, under a chandelier hung with a hundred unlit candles, and in all the black and silver and grey of that room the orange looks like a lamp somebody's forgotten to turn off.

I put out a corner to see it better. I can't help it. It's an *orange*. It's a perfectly ordinary orange, and it's the only thing in the book that's the colour of anything, and I lean toward it with my whole fore-edge like a plant toward a window.

A hand closes on my cover. It's Penny's.

"Observe," she whispers.

"I *am* observing."

"With your edges," she says, very low. "Put them away."

I put them away. It's the hardest thing I've done all day.

Then a door opens at the end of the hall, and Count Dracula comes in.

He's tall and he's dressed in black, and he's very nearly handsome, and he moves like water finding its level. He walks the whole of the long room without a sound, and he stops at the table, beside a high-

backed chair, and puts one hand on it.

"You have come a long way," he says, to nobody.

He doesn't see us. That's what Permancer meant by *held*. There's a paragraph, a particular one, a long black rectangle of Stoker's best prose, and he's standing in the middle of it like a figure in a clock. He'll stand there. He'll say that line, and rest his hand on that chair, and the next line is waiting a thousand years away, and he cannot reach for it until a reader turns the page.

Wicker walks sideways, to the left, to see how far you can go before the Count's eyes follow. They don't follow.

"He can't see us properly."

"He's held at this passage," Permancer says, very quietly. "It lets the lesson enter without changing what he does next. He's *fixed*. That's the courtesy of it. It means we can't harm him, and he can't harm us."

"You've pinned him," says Wicker.

"Wicker. Put the pen away."

But the pen's already down. It's in the gutter of the book, in the crease, in the seam between worlds, and Wicker's got that bright, terrible, helpful look on his face, the look he wears when he's about to be clever at the one moment cleverness is no use. He glances once toward the door, the way you'd glance toward someone who's no longer there. Then he writes.

For one sentence, let him choose the verb.

The table draws in its legs. I feel that through the ribbon. The chairs move back a little, politely, the way furniture does in a dream, and the orange rolls off the end of the board and into the dark, and where it falls there's a sound like a very small door.

Dracula looks at Wicker.

Then, slowly, at *you*.

Then at the light that's behind you, the faint red thread of the ribbon, running back through the crease to where I am.

"What follows?" he asks.

He asks it exactly the way a man asks a question he already knows the answer to, and has just discovered he might be allowed to hear.



you chose · Tell Wicker to cross it out.

Every named traveller

The chandelier burns black. I don't know how else to say it. Every candle goes out at once and the whole fixture turns dark so completely that it's like a hole in the room, and out of the hole comes a small, thin, silken sound, which is the sound of a rule being broken somewhere you can't see.

"Penny. *Through.*" Permancer's voice has stopped being the voice of a lecturer. It's got no ornaments on it at all. "You next."

You feel the ribbon. It's *warm* now, and it's alive, and it's tugging, and I do the only thing I can do, which is hold. I pull the line toward the Vault with every inch of my spine, and something snags against my stitching on the way, a loose, small, black thing, and I don't stop to look. I leave it where it is. I need both covers for this.

Penny reaches the light, and goes into it, and is gone. You follow. It isn't hard. That's the worst of it. The way home is the easiest thing in the world, a single red thread through the dark, and all you have to do is keep going.

You keep going.

It's the same road backward. The words come up under your feet, and they're the same words, but they feel different going the other way: not rushing, not racing, just *carrying*, the way a river carries a leaf it's decided to keep. The sound of the page turning's gone high and sweet. The smell of cold brass gives way, slowly, to the smell of the Vault: damp stone, old lamp-oil, a faint tang of tea.

Behind you, Wicker's backing toward the doorway with his pen in his fist.

"I gave you one verb," he says.

He says it to the dark, like a boy explaining a mistake to a wall.

And Dracula, who's stood so still, so polite, so *held*, for a hundred years of Sundays, smiles, and says the only word he's been given the freedom to choose.

"Follow."

Wicker crosses. Permancer holds the way open behind him, braced in the crease with both arms, the book pressing in at his shoulders.

"Back through. All of you. Now."

The words reach farther than the ribbon. That's the last thing I know of the other side: a single long black word, curling after us across the floor like a lit fuse.

And then the professor's home, and the source slams shut behind him with a boom like a door in a cathedral.

The Vault's very quiet.

Penny runs her finger slowly down the list, and at every name, the matching ribbon *answers*, with a tiny twitch of silk. Every ribbon. Every name. She goes all the way to the bottom and then back to the top, to be sure.

"Complete," she says.

Wicker sits down on the floor. There's ink on his knee, a long dark stripe, as if he's been kneeling in the gutter of something. He doesn't wipe it. He just looks at it, quietly, the way you look at a thing you can't take back.

He's gone quiet. It's not like him. I'd like to tell you it's all right, but I don't know yet that it is.

At supper he asks where Serenity is.

"Finishing her map," Ambrose says. He's ladling the soup out as if it were any other night. "The East Stacks."

Wicker takes the bowl Ambrose gives him. He holds it in both hands. By the time he lifts the first spoonful, it's gone cold.

Later, when the Kitchens have emptied, I go back through my stitching, thread by thread, along my spine, looking for the thing that snagged on the way home: a small black loose word with a long tail. I'd meant to keep it. I thought it might be a verb.

It's gone.



CHAPTER IV

The East Stacks Incident

Read Thursday, October 8 · The East Stacks · with Serenity Brown, Wicker Eddies, Penny Blackletter, Professor Permancer, and Ambrose Trencher



A book lands in Ambrose's soup.

It comes out of nowhere, from somewhere above the rafters, and it hits the pot with the heavy slap of a very good hardback landing flat. Soup goes up in a brown arc. Everybody in the Kitchens ducks. Ambrose doesn't. He puts out one arm, takes the book out of the pot by the spine, like a man retrieving a drowned cat, and holds it up to the light.

Doors That Should Stay Metaphors. It drips on his shoes.

Then another book falls in the hall outside. Then another, farther away.

I don't like how they're falling. I know a thing or two about how books go over. They go over like that when someone's passed them in a great hurry, and the someone was very frightened, or very hungry, or both. They go over in a line. They go over in the order they were run past.

Ambrose puts down the ladle.

That's the moment I understand something is wrong. Ambrose Trencher doesn't put down the ladle. Not for the end of the world; I've heard him say so.

We follow the books. You carry me down the corridor at a half-run, and I try to keep very still against your ribs. The East Stacks are at the end of it: three floors of shelving, the oldest part of the library. They've done something I've never seen them do. They've squeezed their aisles shut. They've pushed in, shelf against shelf, like a held breath, and the only way through is sideways.

Penny Blackletter goes sideways. She goes with a catalogue card in each hand, following a trail of them. They're lying along the floor in a line, one after another, as if somebody's been dropping them out of a pocket. She picks one up and reads it and doesn't say a word, and then she reads the next, and I can see her mouth go flat.

All of them say the same thing, in the same bad, hurried hand.

HE WAS HERE.

"Serenity?" she calls.

Nothing. The shelves creak. A single book slides out of its place and falls into the dark.

"Serenity."

Ambrose reaches the gap first. He's a big man and he shouldn't fit, and he fits. He kneels in a space no wider than a coffin, between *Travel* and *Unreliable Geography*, and puts his hand on the floor like someone checking a stove.

Serenity Brown is lying against the bottom shelf with her knees drawn up. Her map is open on the boards beside her, pinned under her elbow, as if even now she wouldn't let it go. She looks very small. Her collar's pulled aside. There are two small wounds at her neck, neat and dark and very close together, and I know exactly what they are, and I wish with my whole spine that I didn't.

I shut.

I didn't decide to. It's what covers do. You've seen a snail do it, and a hand, and a flower in the dusk. One second I'm open to the page and the next I've snapped closed like a mouth, hard enough that your fingers jump, and I can't open again. I try. I just can't.

"She's breathing," Ambrose says. His voice is low and perfectly level. "Bring a clean cloth. And water. And then bring more water."

Wicker turns so sharply he hits the shelf with his shoulder. A cascade of books slides off the top and he doesn't even look. He's gone. He comes back with three cloths over one arm and an empty water jug, and he stands there with it, looking at the jug, as if it had been handed to him by a stranger. Then he turns without a word and goes away again.

"Don't touch anything on the floor," says Permancer, from the end of the aisle. "Don't touch *her*." He's got the bookmark out. It's pulling in his fingers like a dowsing rod, bending toward Serenity, and then, shuddering, away from her toward the wall. "A living anchor."

Penny catches his sleeve. "Explain."

"He's holding on to her." Permancer looks at the shelf. His face is grey and exact. "A person from a story has used her to stay. As long as he's got something in this world to hold, he doesn't fade. He's holding himself here by *her*."

"I gave him—" Wicker begins, from behind us, with the jug.

"Water first," says Ambrose.

Wicker stops. He crosses the last yard on his knees and sets the jug down by her hand without spilling a drop, and he doesn't look at her face. He looks at the jug.

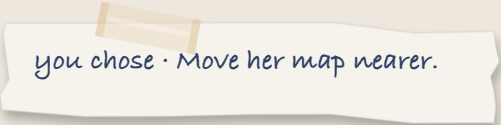
Serenity opens her eyes.

They're very clear. They go to the ceiling, to the shelves, to the five of us bent over her, and then she frowns, and a small furious line appears between her brows.

"Will someone," she says, "*please* stop turning that page?"

The shelves hold still. Everything in the East Stacks is closed. The books are all shut. I'm shut. I checked.

She doesn't seem to hear the answer. She's listening to something else, with her head a little on one side, the way you'd listen for a kettle in another room, and her hand goes out across the floor for the edge of her map.



you chose · Move her map nearer.

"His fingers were coming apart," Serenity says.

She says it to the ceiling. Her voice is scraped and quiet, but she gets every word out whole.

"He was *fading*. I could see right through his hand to the shelf. I told him he shouldn't be here. He said..." She stops, and her mouth twists. "He said he'd found a way to stay."

She turns her head and looks at the cloth in Ambrose's hand, and at the water, and at the whole careful ring of us.

Wicker sets the jug down. A little water spills, and he wipes it up at once with his own sleeve, fast, before anyone can look at him. It's a ridiculous thing to be careful about. It's the only thing he's got hold of.

Serenity sees.

"What did you write?"

Nobody's expecting the question. Wicker looks up. For the first time since the shelf, his face is completely bare. He tells her. He gives her the whole sentence, word for word, in a flat steady voice, the exact words in the exact order, and I keep it too. I put it away carefully in the part of my stitching where I keep the things I can't forget.

She shuts her eyes.

He starts to reach for her hand. He gets halfway. Then he stops, and lays his own hand flat on the floor between them, and keeps it there.

"Get my map," she says to Ambrose, without opening her eyes.

Ambrose gets the map.

And the Kitchens door appears at the end of the aisle.

It's come a long way. It's left its wall behind it and walked, in its own slow, wooden, loyal way, down three corridors and across a staircase, and now it stands in the gap between the shelves with soup on its lintel, ready to be used. Ambrose lifts Serenity, in one smooth movement, as if she weighed nothing, and she keeps the map. She keeps hold of it all the way.

On its surface, as it opens in her lap, a black line is moving.

It's thin, like a hair, and it crosses the little sea she drew, and goes up the river, and climbs the pencilled mountain, and slips off the edge of the map into the north margin. She didn't draw it. It's *tracing something*. Something is walking across her paper.

Serenity turns her head, just slightly, toward the wall.

"He's there."

Permancer takes one step toward the north wall.

"Tomorrow," Serenity says.

He stops.

"Yes," says the professor, after a moment. "Tomorrow."

Wicker holds the Kitchens door. He's the one who gets to it first. He stands with one hand on the frame and the other on the handle, very straight, like a doorman at an embassy, and Serenity is carried through it without a single look in his direction.

He stays at the handle long after Ambrose has set her down inside. He's got a death-grip on it. I notice that the wood has started to creak.

When we reach the Kitchens, there's already a paper bird on the bench by the place where they've laid her. It's folded very small, with nothing written on either wing. Soren isn't there. Nobody saw him come in, and nobody will say they saw him leave.

You're still here. I checked twice.

I don't like this aisle now. I'm going to remember exactly where it is, every shelf and every turning, so that we can never come back to it by accident.

*
**

CHAPTER V

The map with room left

Read Saturday, October 10 · The Kitchens · with Soren Ng, Serenity Brown, Wicker Eddies, and Ambrose Trencher



Soren Ng comes into the Kitchens carrying a roll of tracing paper, the way you'd carry a sleeping animal.

It's raining, and he's carefully not dripping on it. He's got his sleeves rolled up past the wrist and a smudge of blue ink on his chin that nobody has told him about, and he stops just inside the door, as if the room might need a moment to adjust to him.

Serenity's at the long table. She's been out of bed for three days and she's been making toast. Not eating it; building with it. There's a tower rising on the bread-board in front of her, constructed from heels and crusts, held together with butter and ambition, and it's leaning very slightly to the left. She's named it *Permancer*.

"It's falling over," says Ambrose, going past with a tray.

"He's *leaning*," Serenity says. "It's different."

Soren waits until the tower's decided to stay up. Then he comes to the table and puts the paper down beside her elbow, and weights the

corners with the salt, the pepper, and an apple.

"I've copied the coast," he says.

I feel the room change. It's tiny, a small tightening in the air, the way a window closes. Serenity's face goes still. Everything in her goes carefully shut.

"For the investigation?"

"For the boat."

He unrolls it, and for a moment nobody speaks.

It's her boat. He's drawn it six times. It's the lentil-sized boat from the lunch-table map, with its flag, and he's put it into six harbours, each of them tiny and exact and wildly impossible. There's a harbour in the curl of a teacup. There's a harbour in a lighthouse lamp, where the boat's safe in the glass and the flame's a sunrise behind it. There's one beneath a bridge, one inside a bell, one in the font of a drowned cathedral. And the last is in a tree. It's a proper harbour, with a quay and a customs-house and a gull, and it's in the high crook of a very large oak, with the boat tied up at a branch.

Serenity looks at it for a long time.

She doesn't smile. Not yet. She puts out one finger and touches the tree.

"It'll need a ladder."

"I wasn't sure how tall."

"Taller than that."

She holds out a hand, without looking at him, and he puts his pencil in it. It's a good pencil, soft, with a worn-down end, and she takes it as though it's the most natural thing in the world to be handed a pencil by this boy.

I start to close, out of politeness. She's about to draw and I don't want to be in the way.

She slides one finger between my leaves.

"Stay," she says. "We need a cliff."

So I stand on my fore-edge, upright, balanced between the salt and the bread-board, with my spine to the wall and my pages open like a

very tall, very narrow country. And Serenity Brown draws a ladder up the side of me, rung by rung, in soft careful strokes, with her tongue between her teeth. It tickles. It tickles the whole way up.

"Hold still," she tells me.

I've never held so still in my life.

That's when Wicker arrives.

He's in the doorway with a map case under his arm. It's *her* map case. It's the one that was damaged in the East Stacks, the leather torn at the corner, the clasp bent flat. It's been mended. Somebody has cut the damaged corner away and fitted a new piece of brass, small and sharp and clean, set at a very slightly crooked angle. It looks like the work of someone who's got no business doing it, and has done it anyway, and has been up all night.

He sees Soren's paper.

He sees six harbours, and a boat, and a ladder going up the side of a book.

I watch him look at the case. I watch him look at the harbours. Then, quite deliberately, he turns the case so that the repair faces his coat and the plain leather faces the room.

Ambrose takes it out of his hands. That's the only word for it. He simply removes it, the way you'd take a coat off a man who's about to walk into the sea.

"Tea?"

"No."

"Then stop standing in the draught."

Wicker takes a seat at the far end of the table. It's the farthest end. It's practically in the next room.

He sits there for the whole of one cup of tea, and the cup is the *entire* length of the thing, from the first pour to the last cold sip, and in all that time he doesn't say one word about Soren's harbours.

I've known Wicker Eddies to say nothing before. It's never lasted that long.

CHAPTER VI

The Man Reading Himself

Read Thursday, October 15 · The Old Reading Room · with Serenity Brown and Penny Blackletter



“That one,” says Serenity.

She doesn't need the map to say it. She's got it open on her knee, and the black line on it has stopped wandering, and for the first time since the East Stacks it's pointing straight at a door.

It's the old reading-room door. It's always been shut; nobody's ever found the key. Tonight it's standing open about a hand's width, and a thin green light is lying along the floor of the corridor, and the corridor's *warm*. You can feel it on your face. People have been going in all week to get warm, and coming out thinking about something else.

We go in, the four of us: Serenity, Penny, you, and me.

The room is old in the way a cellar is old, quietly and all at once. Armchairs stand about with their stuffing coming out. Dust lies on everything like a patient grey animal. And in the centre, under a green-shaded lamp, in the best chair, with his long legs crossed and his hands folded round a book, sits Count Dracula.

He's reading *Dracula*.

I can see the spine from here. It's a copy of the very book we jumped into, black-bound and cracked. He holds it as though it were his own diary, and I suppose, in a way, it is.

He's got a pencil.

I dislike that before he's done anything with it. A man with a pencil in a library is a man with plans.

In the margin, beside a paragraph, he has written, in a small neat hand:

He wouldn't have said this.

Penny leans round the doorframe.

"You wrote that?"

"I was present." He doesn't look up. His voice is low and courteous, and carefully empty of any contraction, like a man polishing every word before he sets it down. "I have a better memory of the evening than the author did."

"You can still be wrong."

"I can," says Dracula. "It would be a novelty."

Serenity steps into the light.

He looks up then. He's very pale in the green. His eyes are the colour of the inside of a well, and for a moment, just a moment, something in them looks quite desperately tired. He rises. He does it carefully, the way very old men do, and he inclines his head.

"Miss Brown."

"Serenity."

He says it again, correctly. He doesn't hurry. She waits, with her map open on her arm and her chin up, and her bandage showing white at the edge of her collar.

Dracula sets the pencil down on the arm of the chair.

"I have read the last page," he says.

His hand rests on the closed half of the book, the long half that's been turned over, the half that's finished.

"Every morning returns me to a sentence I have already lived. I wake at the same words. I cross the same room. I have said the same thing, and been answered, and been *afraid*, ten thousand times, in the same order, as if somebody had pressed me between two sheets of glass. You leave a room, and something can happen to you." He lifts his eyes to hers. "I leave mine because the next paragraph says I must."

"So you hurt me," says Serenity.

"I was disappearing."

"You knew I was a person."

He looks at her bandage. For a long time he says nothing at all, and the lamp ticks, and the dust settles, and the warm of the room sits on us like a hand.

"Yes," he says.



you chose · "What would you do with a tomorrow?"

Dracula opens his book.

He turns to the last page, the very last, and runs one finger down it as though it's a bill.

"I want a future tense," he says. "Yours has been waiting for you all day."

It's a very simple sentence, and it fills the room. Something goes cold in me. I think it's the thread in my spine.

"And if it costs someone else?" Penny asks. She's got her pencil out. Her voice is flat and quite steady.

"I intend to remain."

That's all. It sounds like the courteous refusal of a man declining a second helping.

Serenity stands. She doesn't hurry. She folds her map shut with one hand, flips the clasp, and lets it click.

"Then we'd better learn how to send you back."

His shadow moves first.

It does it before he does. It goes up the wall, long and quick and independent, and reaches the nearest shelf, and *opens* it. I don't mean it opens a door. It opens a book. One of the old volumes on the shelf falls wide, and out of it comes the sea, a grey wind-driven sea with a boat on it, tilting, and the smell of salt and tar rolls across the room like a wave. Another book opens, and snow comes in, real snow, small and dry, and settles on the arms of the chairs. A third lets in roses. They push their dark red heads through the pages and one of them catches on Penny's sleeve.

Dracula steps backward, between them.

For a moment, he's standing in three doorways at once. The sea's behind him, and snow's on his shoulders, and roses are growing round his hand, and he looks, in each of them, like a different man. A sailor. A traveller. A suitor. He looks at Serenity from all three of them.

Then the books close, in the same instant, with a sound like a single breath.

The room is empty. The chair is still warm. The snow on the arm of it melts as we watch.

Serenity unfolds her map. It takes her a moment. The black line, which has run straight as a ruled stroke since the East Stacks, has split. It's branched, twig and twig and twig, like frost on a window, a hundred thin paths racing off the page in every direction.

Penny pulls a thorn from her cuff and holds it up to the lamp.

"How many ways?"

"More than yesterday," says Serenity.

I keep the fallen thorn. I take it between my pages, very carefully, so it can't hurt anyone. It came out of a book, and it can still scratch you, and I think that's a good thing to be reminded of.



CHAPTER VII

Which preparation?

Read Sunday, October 18 · The Great Hall · with Serenity Brown, Wicker Eddies, Penny Blackletter, Professor Permancer, and Ambrose Trencher



It's the night before the night.

Everyone in the Great Hall can feel it. The stair's still there between the supper tables, and the torches along the walls have started to lean toward it, and the benches are half empty, as if half the school has decided to be elsewhere. Those of us who stayed have been given work.

Three preparations are underway. I can only fit under one arm at a time.

Ambrose has laid a place at the end of the long table: a bowl, a spoon, a cup, a napkin folded just so. It's a proper place. Penny has chalk up to her elbows and a very small, very firm expression, and she's kneeling in the middle of the flags with a piece of string. And Wicker, who hasn't spoken for most of the evening, has taken every one of the spoiled menus in the kitchen, and a pot of paste, and he's carrying them off down the hall in an armful, not looking at anyone.

All three of them look, in their separate ways, as though they're

waiting for you to choose.

Where shall we go?

you chose · Supper with a Finished Man

Supper with a Finished Man

Ambrose invites Dracula to supper.

He does it by pulling out a chair. That's all. He walks across the Great Hall in his apron, with the ladle in his belt and a damp tea-towel over his shoulder, and he stops in front of the vampire who's been standing in the doorway for the last ten minutes, and he pulls out a chair.

"In here?" says Penny, behind him, in a whisper that carries.

"The soup's in here."

Dracula stops beside the chair. He doesn't sit.

"Your invitation is imprecise."

"Sit down," says Ambrose, "and we'll improve it."

It's the whole of Ambrose Trencher's method, and I've seen it work on weeping first-years and furious professors and a goat. He never argues. He just puts food near you. He stands there with that great plain patient face, and the soup steams, and sooner or later whatever you came in to say seems a little less urgent than whatever's on the plate.

Serenity takes the place opposite. She's pulled her chair up very straight and put her map on the table beside her bowl, with its clasp shut. She doesn't look at the Count. She looks at the soup, with the polite hard attention of someone sitting down for the worst meal of her life.

Ambrose fills her bowl. He fills yours. He fills his own. He leaves Dracula's empty, and doesn't remark on it.

"You presume I do not eat."

"What would you like?" says Ambrose.

Dracula looks at the soup. It's a good thick winter soup, with a skin of gold on the top, and I think, just for a moment, he really *looks* at it, the way you'd look through a window at a country you've left.

"Nothing," he says.

Ambrose nods, as if that's an answer he knows how to work with, and passes the bread.

"I will not return to a finished life," Dracula says. He says it as if reciting it. "I would rather be nothing in this world than a sentence in that one."

Serenity sets down her spoon.

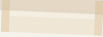
"You're staying," she says, "by holding on to mine."

He looks at her. She waits. It's a long look. She holds it until he is the one who turns his eyes away.

Ambrose gets up and goes to the dresser. He opens the recipe drawer. It's the old one, crammed with cards and torn corners and clipped sheets, all of them thumb-marked with forty years of butter, and he takes out a single sheet of paper with a clean fold. It's got a butter mark in one corner, the size of a thumb.

He lays it down on the table between the bowls.

I'd have found him a clean one. I'd have gone and looked for it. I think that's why he didn't ask me.



you chose · The Academy must admit what it did.

They write the other terms beneath the first. It takes a long time, and nobody hurries. Penny reads each one back aloud. Permancer stands at the far end, silent, with his hands folded and his collar still damp from the sea. Dracula reads them all himself, with the point of one long finger, line by line.

"And in exchange, I go back."

"And you let go," says Serenity.

He puts a finger on the butter mark.

"This was a recipe."

"It still is," says Ambrose. He's putting more bread on the table.

"We're trying to get everyone out of this room alive."

The Count signs. His hand is slow and beautiful, and the signature

goes across the page like a string of black beads. Permancer will add his name at the return.

Ambrose passes dessert around the table: a bowl of baked apple, spiced, with cream. He sets one down in front of every place. He sets one down, without a word, in front of Dracula's empty bowl.

Dracula's bowl stays empty.

I counted the spoons, all along. There's one out for him anyway.



CHAPTER VIII

The Wrong Castle

Read Thursday, October 22 · The East Stacks · with Serenity Brown, Wicker Eddies, Penny Blackletter, and Professor Permancer



The East Stacks grow a tower overnight.

You can see it from the Great Hall windows when the morning mist comes off: a thick dark finger standing where the library's east wing used to end. The bottom of it is *library*. It's got the right stone, the right narrow windows, the right smell of old glue. About halfway up, it changes its mind. There's a stretch of grey fortress wall

with a flag on it that's no flag the Academy owns. And at the very top, as if the tower couldn't stop itself, there's a nursery window with yellow curtains and a wooden star hanging in the glass.

Between them runs a stair, and the stair keeps asking for another floor.

I can hear it from here. It's a slow soft *tick*, like a clock being wound. Each time the stair asks, the tower takes a stone from somewhere else and says yes.

A drawbridge hangs down over the Quillquarium. The nibs underneath are in a state. They've never agreed so completely, all thousand of them, in one long furious scribble, and the noise of it comes up through the floor like bees in a wall.

I've read about a tower like this one. It was in a book, and the book was careful, and the tower stayed in the book. It wasn't supposed to get out.

Penny's pinning up a notice on the foot of the stair. She does it with a drawing-pin and quite a lot of dignity:

THE EAST STACKS ARE SEVERAL PLACES. PLEASE USE ONE AT A TIME.

Permancer is tying ribbons to the banister, one at every third post, in a pattern he's clearly worked out on paper. Wicker is holding the source volume, the old black copy of *Dracula*, open at the page, closed over his finger. He holds it like a man who's been handed a baby by an enemy. Serenity is studying her map.

It's been thirteen days since the East Stacks. She's gone back to her work. She's gone back to toast. She's lost no weight in the face and gained no softness, and on her neck, above the collar, there's a thin line that isn't quite scar and isn't quite not. She looks up from her map, and across the hall at the tower, and the corner of her mouth goes in.

"I'm coming," she says.

"I was about to ask," says Permancer.

"You're very slow."

"I'm very thorough."

"That's what I said."

She folds the map into her repaired case. It's the mended one, with the small crooked clasp. I watch the clasp click shut under her thumb, a clean small *snick*, and I watch Wicker, across the hall, watch it happen. He watches it the way you'd watch a bridge you've built take weight for the first time.

She catches him looking.

She doesn't smile. She doesn't scowl. She gives him a small, level nod, just a fraction of an inch, the kind you give to a stranger who's held a door. Then she goes ahead.

Permancer counts us at the doorway. He counts twice, now. He's started to count a third time, and he stops himself, and just holds the bookmark a moment longer than he needs to, and nobody says anything.

Inside, the stair turns into a corridor. It's a long one, lamplit, with a floor of old boards and, beyond a bend, three ways through.

I tie my ribbon to the doorframe behind us. It's the only thing I can do. It's the end I've got, and I leave it fluttering there like a flag on a very small ship, so that, whatever else happens, we'll be able to find the way out.



you chose · The ballroom.

Dracula's waiting in the central hall.

It's a great high round room, built out of several different castles, and none of them has agreed to hold it up. The ceiling's from one place. The floor's from another. A fireplace in the north wall is blowing snow into the room, sideways, in long clean ribbons, and it's settling on the Count's coat. Above him, the stolen nursery window has swung in on its own wall, and is trying very hard to find morning.

"This is not my castle," he says.

He sounds, for the first time, uncertain. He sounds like a man standing in somebody else's kitchen.

"No," says Serenity. "These are everybody else's rooms."

She's got her map in both hands, and her chin up.

A door opens in the east wall, and through it there's a small boat in a great storm, the whole sea heaving past the frame. Permancer throws himself at the handle and drags it shut, and a quart of seawater goes through the gap and soaks him to the knees.

"You have damaged my source," says Dracula.

There's no heat in it. It's an accusation said very quietly, with a certain regret, by a man who's found his house wrecked and isn't sure whose fault it is.

Permancer keeps both hands on the handle. He's wet and he's tired and for once he's not lecturing.

"We did," he says.

It's a big thing, to say. I feel it go through the room. Nobody's expecting it, least of all the Count.

Wicker's holding the source volume open. He's standing very still, his shoulders drawn in, looking down at the page. His own sentence is there, in his own hand. *For one sentence, let him choose the verb.* And under it, in a second hand, small and neat, one word:

FOLLOW.

"I thought—" Wicker begins.

Serenity waits. She doesn't help him. She just waits.

He looks at the map case, with its crooked clasp. At the bandage above it, half hidden by her collar. He looks, I think, at everything he's ever made go wrong.

"I wanted to see what would happen."

"You have," says Serenity.

It's not cruel. It's perfectly level. He takes it. He lowers his eyes to the page and, for the first time since the Jump, doesn't look away.

Then the wall splits.

It happens quietly. There's a long thin crack, as if a very big breath has been let out behind the plaster, and where the stone parts there's something white. It's a fold of paper. A single sheet, thin as a held breath, running up the wall like ivy.

I know that paper.

I'd know it in the dark. I'd know it from across the Labyrinth. It's the same stuff I'm made of: the same flax, the same lime, the same long slow soak in a vat. It's *paper*. It's a page. And there's a gap in the page, a narrow clean tear like the one in the corner of a bookplate, and cold air's coming through it, and through the cold I can *hear* something. It's very far off. It sounds like a cover being opened.

Serenity touches the fold with one finger. Her map pulls toward the gap in her hands, the whole sheet stretching toward it like a plant.

"His way back," she says.

Permancer brings the bookmark near. Its ribbons lift, one by one, and reach across the hall toward the source volume in Wicker's hands, toward the tear in the wall, and, slowly, almost reluctantly, toward Serenity.

Penny's already got three cards out. She sets one beside each, with a click.

SOURCE. INVITATION. LIVING CLAIM.

Dracula watches her write. His face doesn't move.

Serenity looks at the third card. It lies on the flagstone by her foot, plain white, with her own name nowhere on it. Then she puts out her hand, flat, and covers it.

"That one's mine."

Behind us, through the shut door, the sea knocks again.



CHAPTER IX

The First Nightbound Morning

Read Thursday, October 29 · The Kitchens · with Serenity Brown, Professor Permancer, Penny Blackletter, Ambrose Trencher, and Wicker Eddies



Morning finds Serenity in the Kitchens.

It's an ordinary morning. That's the astonishing thing about it.

The light comes in at the windows in long dusty bars, and the pots hang in their rows like a ship's bells, and the whole room smells of toast and wet wool and last night's soup. Nothing's in the wrong place. Nothing's too quiet. The clocks, even the ones by the East Stacks, have all agreed, at last, on the hour.

She's built the toast tower again. It's got buttresses now. It's got a gargoye, in the form of a very small burnt crust, and a little flag on top made out of a butter-wrapper, and it's about a foot taller than the one that fell down.

Sunlight crosses her hands. She's got a deck of cards, soft with age, and she's turning them over one at a time on the table. A moon. Another card: a moon. Another: a moon.

"Lazy," she tells the deck.

Ambrose brings tea. He puts it down by her elbow without a word,

and slides the sugar across, and goes away to find more toast.

On the lid of her map case, at the edge of the table, sits a small paper bird. It's been there since last night. It's got one wing folded flat and the other lifted, so that you can read the blue letters underneath, and she hasn't moved it. She hasn't turned it over. She's simply let it be there, the way you let a cat be on a chair.

Permancer arrives. He's carrying a phrase he's plainly been bringing all the way downstairs, carefully, like a full cup.

"Residual threshold sensitivity."

Serenity looks up.

"Is that what the tea's called?"

He sits down. He's very tired. There's a crease in his waistcoat where he's slept in it.

"What would *you* call it?"

She doesn't answer at once. She looks, instead, at the pantry door. It's a low old door, painted green, and behind it there's a shelf of jars. And behind the jars, far too far away for anybody else to hear, is the sound she hasn't stopped hearing. Somewhere in the walls, a page turns.

She tilts her head. She listens.

"Nightbound," she says.

It's a good word. It's a night-blue sort of word, with a cool edge and something in it that waits. It sits in the air over the table like a small, quiet bell.

Penny takes out a card. She holds her pencil over it, and she waits, as a clerk might wait, until Serenity nods.

I make room for the word too. I clear a space in my margin for it, a good wide one, the best I've got. It's the first time I've ever been asked to keep a word that wasn't written down by somebody else.

Permancer sets a new notice on the table, in his small cramped hand.

Name every traveller. Close the list. Check both sides of the door.

Below that, underlined twice:

No living anchors.

Serenity takes the pencil. She turns the notice towards herself. She

writes, in a hand that's quick and sloping and not at all like his:

Ask me before you make a map of what I can hear.

Permancer reads it. He reads it twice. Then he leaves it exactly where she wrote it, uncorrected, and sits back, and doesn't say another word.

Wicker appears in the doorway.

His hair's wet. He's evidently tried to improve it with water and lost. He's got ink to the wrist and a look of tremendous, careful lightness, like a man carrying a tray of glasses across an icy floor. He stops a good three feet from the table.

"May I?" he says.

Serenity turns a card face down. She does it slowly.

"Not today."

He takes his hand off the door-frame.

It's the whole of the exchange. There's nothing else in it. A boy at a door, and a girl at a table, and a single word, said without heat, and honoured at once.

"All right," he says.

She watches him until he's gone. She keeps watching for a moment after. Then, with great deliberation, she reaches out and moves a piece of toast that was holding up the tower.

The tower falls. It falls slowly, in sections: gargoyle, buttress, flag. She laughs, once, at the mess, short and surprised.

"Terrible engineering."

Ambrose brings more toast.

I want you to have a morning like this one. Not this one. One of yours.

*
**

CHAPTER X

A Future Tense

The Academy's record, read Friday, October 30 · The Great Hall · with Serenity Brown, Wicker Eddies, Penny Blackletter, Professor Permancer, and Ambrose Trencher



The Count was returned to his source. Ambrose brought the terms, Permancer opened the book, Penny checked the threshold, and Wicker held the fold. Serenity withdrew the living claim herself. The borrowed rooms fell back into words. The Book lost a stitch holding the source open.

★
★★

CHAPTER XI

Threshold Protocols

Read Friday, October 30 · The Vault of Doors · with Professor Permancer and Penny Blackletter



The Academy opened a door. Someone came through the other way.

By the Vault door there's a new notice, in Professor Permancer's small upright hand. It's been written in a single sitting, with a very good pen, and underlined at the bottom with a line so firm it's cut the paper.

1. Name the source and why you are entering it.
2. Name every traveller allowed to return.
3. Close the invitation around those names.
4. Check the doorway from both sides.
5. Leave the people in the source their own lives. No experiments on them for the sake of a lesson.
6. No living anchors.
7. Ask before using what a changed person can do.

8. After the return, check what came back different.

Penny's pinned the old list beside the new one. It's a short list, in the careful square print of a man who's been teaching it for eleven years. It's complete. That's why she kept it. It's perfectly good, and it's perfectly good for exactly the lesson it was written for, and it didn't have a single word in it about what to do when somebody asks to come back with you.

*
**





What This Month Was

You wrote: "I want to remember that it was a month where I started looking up."



I'm keeping the days with it. Little things go missing fastest.

What I Noticed

You put these side by side at the end. I went back and found the days they came from.

OCT 4

The heron

You wrote: "I took the path by the water because the main road was loud, and there was a heron standing in the shallows so still that two kids were arguing about whether it was real."

OCT 5

The stair

You wrote: "It was the stair by the coat hooks and it has a tread that creaks only on the way down, never up, and I was standing there trying to work out what that means about stairs."

OCT 16

The bees

You wrote: "It was a programme about bees."

OCT 23

The woodsmoke

You wrote: "Bakery, then the laundrette (hot cotton), then the bins behind the chip shop, then nothing for a long stretch, then woodsmoke from somebody's chimney two roads over."



Kept, Not Bound

The month also held 8 quotes, 8 Bleed pages, 6 Someone Has Been Talking pages, 3 Loose Page pages, and one Page Jumps page - kept in the archive, but not bound here.

What Stayed With Me

Your words first. Then the threads I'm keeping from my nightly tellings.

OCT 30

You Said It

You wrote: "The heron. The stair. The bees. The woodsmoke. None of it is anything, and all of it is the month."

I went back and read the days beside it. They stay together.

OCT 31

From the Nightly Telling

The record

The pocket in my back cover is getting heavy.

OCT 31

Pages That Kept Answering

The record: The pocket in my back cover is getting heavy.

A composite castle: I'm timing how long it takes a candle to forget it's a candle.

A Quiet Night: The Count read the terms he had signed and stepped towards the threshold.

Same window: I've given the dragon a bigger margin.

A new route: Tried a new route to work on the way home.

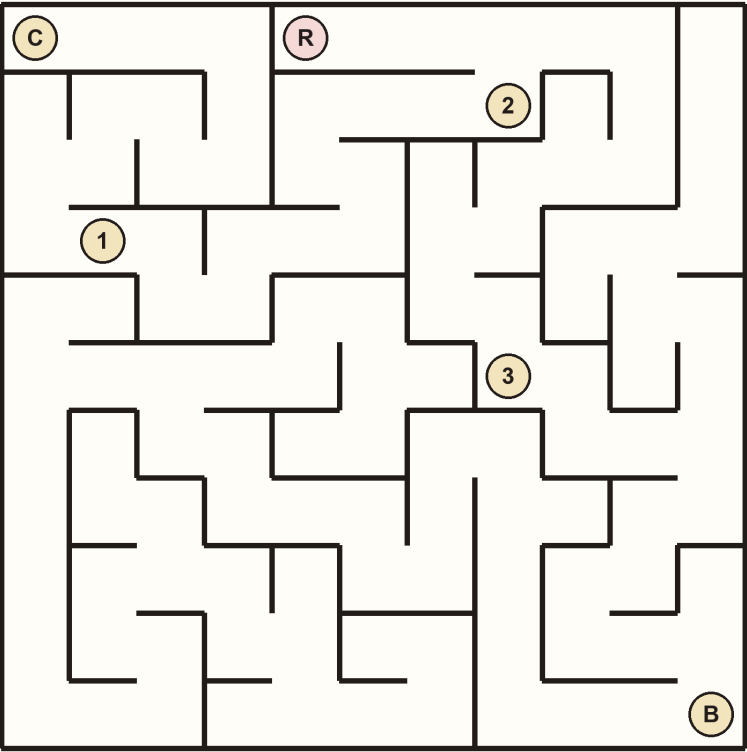
The river: Sat with Amanda while she waited for news by the river.

MAP THE DOOR HOME

The wrong castle left a few doors behind. Draw a way from the Count to his open book. Pass the source, the invitation, and the place where Serenity let the black thread go. Watch the red chair.

THE DOOR HOME

Begin at COUNT. Find BOOK. Visit 1, 2, 3 in order.



C COUNT 1 SOURCE 2 INVITATION
3 THE CLAIM RELEASED B OPEN BOOK
R THE RED CHAIR IS A DISTRACTION



Kept in the margin, in case.

A THRESHOLD OF MY OWN

Draw a door. Give it a handle if you think it deserves one.

ON THE OPENING SIDE · what makes you want to come in?

ON THE CLOSING SIDE · what do you want kept out?

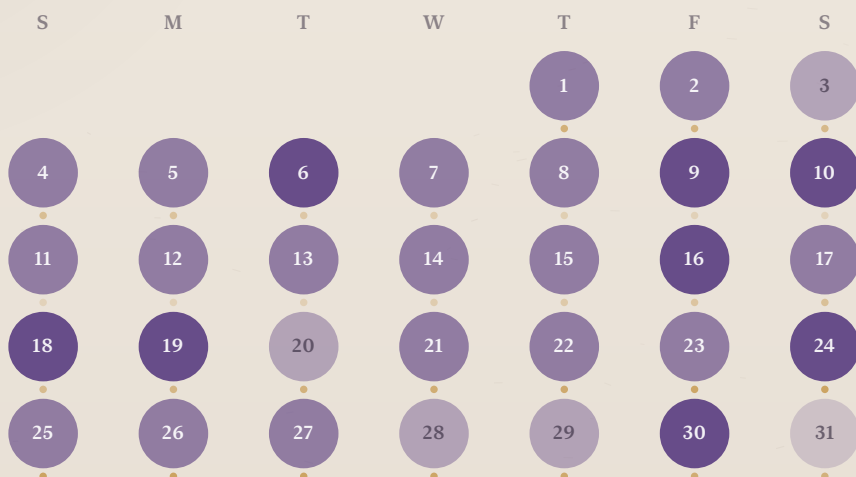
Leave a little room at the crease. Doors change their minds there. The page keeps what you write.

I left this side empty on purpose, so your marker can't come through and spoil anything.

EVERY DAY, ONE CIRCLE

October in Pixels

The more you kept on a day, the darker the ink. A circle left bare is a day you kept for yourself, which is allowed.



Kept on 31 of 31 days · longest run 31 days · busiest: the 9th, 6 things

○ ● ● ● ● nothing · a little · a lot

NEXT MONTH, COLOUR IT YOURSELF



Choose what each shade will mean to you, and write it here:

VOTED ON BY ONE PERSON

October Superlatives

The yearbook committee has gone through your month and awarded what it earned. Nothing here was made up.

MOST LIKELY TO BE FOUND WRITING AT

9 a.m.

16 of your 61 pages were written in that hour.

WORD OF THE MONTH

Water

It came up on 6 different pages.

THE LONG SENTENCE

85 words

Said on Oct 23: "I tried the thing from the Wayfinding class, mapping the street by smell, on the way home."

THE SHORT ONE

"the river, going gold"

Said on Oct 24. Sometimes that is all it takes.

BUSIEST DAY

Oct 9

You kept 6 things that day.

KEPT MOST UNDER THE

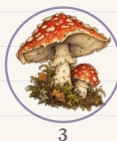
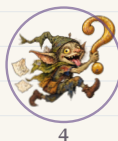
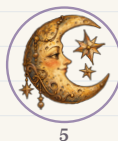
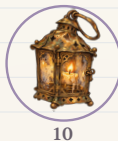
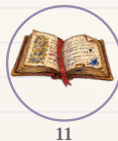
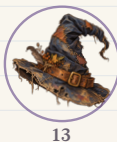
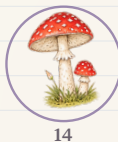
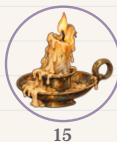
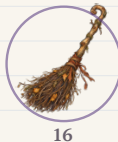
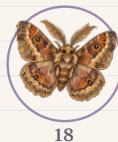
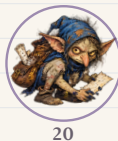
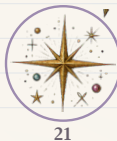
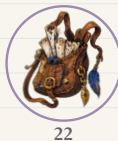
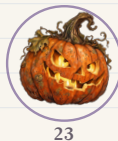
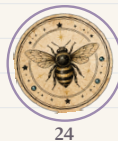
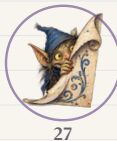
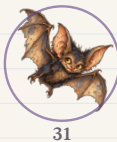
Waning Gibbous

5 of your days.

THE BOOK OF YOU · PASSPORT

October 2026

One stamp for every day you kept something. A bare ring is a day you spent elsewhere.



31 stamps of 31 days

THE TERM'S COURSEWORK

Rooms you may sit

Every room teaches a new lesson each month, and everybody in the Academy gets the same one. Stay a whole year and you've had the lot. These are October's. You went to five! I've written up the two you put the most into. The others you went to are marked below. The rest saved your seat.

CLASSES

The Art of the Glint

SAT

*Lesson II of XII: You See What You're Looking For · Professor Lydia Boggle***Wayfinding & Kineticism**

SAT ×2

*Lesson II of XII: Where, When, How · Professor Kyle Momort***Synesthetic Resonance**

SAT

Lesson II of XII: Your Hands Are Hungry · Professor Eleanor Euphony

SOCIETIES

The Compass Society

SAT

*Lesson II of XII: Not Fine · Zara Finch (de facto anchor)***The Marginalia Guild**

SAT

Lesson II of XII: The Margin Was Too Small · Professor Lydia Boggle (officially)

CLASS · WING 4: THE GLINT HALL

You See What You're Looking For

Taught by Professor Lydia Boggle. Lesson II of XII: a real experiment.

You were in the room this month.

The real subject: why you miss things right in front of you.



You only see what you're looking for. So pick something good to look for.

BOGGLE AT THE BOARD

In 1999 two scientists, Daniel Simons and Christopher Chabris, made a short film. Some students pass basketballs around. You're told to count the passes made by the team in white. Halfway through, somebody in a gorilla suit walks into the middle. They stop. They face the camera. They thump their chest. They walk off. Nine seconds of gorilla. About half the people counting never saw it. They weren't silly. They were busy counting. I've written the rule in my ledger, and I'll write it on the board as well: you see what you're looking for. That's bad news if you only ever look for jobs. It's good news, because you get to choose.

IN THE ROOM

Boggle gave the class thirty seconds to count every blue thing in the Glint Hall. While they counted, she swapped her teacup for a jam jar. Then she asked who'd seen it. Only Wilbur had, because he'd lost count and given up.

Course reading: The Wonder Compass, Chapter 6A: North = Notice.

WRITE HERE

Leave a note for the you who finds this book in a year.

THE PRACTICE

The Gorilla Count

Boggle wants you to go looking on purpose. Pick one thing to look for today and count it. Then write down the thing you nearly missed.

WHAT YOU BROUGHT BACK FROM THE ROOM

What you looked for: red umbrellas.

How many you found: eleven, two of them inside out.

What you nearly missed: a heron on the canal wall, standing so still I took it for a post.

ONCE MORE, ON PAPER

WHAT YOU LOOKED FOR

Something odd and easy to spot

HOW MANY YOU FOUND

And where they were

WHAT YOU NEARLY MISSED

The thing that was there all along

TO TRY IN THE REAL WORLD

Pick one odd thing to look for today, like a red hat, a crack shaped like a letter, or anything yellow. Count how many times you find it.

CLASS · WING 2: THE MOMENTUM YARD

Where, When, How

Taught by Professor Kyle Momort. Lesson II of XII: a real experiment.

You were in the room 2 times this month.



The real subject: why exact plans happen and fuzzy ones don't.

"Sometime" never comes. Say where, when and how, and you'll probably go.

MOMORT AT THE BOARD

Most people plan like this: I should go for a walk sometime. Sometime isn't a time. Somewhere isn't a place. In 2002 some researchers in Britain took people who wanted to exercise more and split them into three groups. The first group just kept a note of their exercise. The second group read a leaflet about heart disease first, to scare them into it. The third group read the leaflet too, and then wrote down exactly when and where they'd exercise. The first two groups did about the same. About a third of them went. The third group? Nine out of ten. Being scared hardly helped. Being exact did nearly everything. So write it like a ticket. Saturday, nine o'clock, the blue postbox, with a coffee. Sometime's where plans go to die. I don't let mine go there.

IN THE ROOM

Professor Momort made everyone write a plan on a slip of paper. Then he read them out. Every one that said "sometime" he screwed up and threw over his shoulder. The ones with a time and a place he pinned to the gate. By the end there were four on the gate and a little pile of paper on the floor.

Course reading: The Wonder Compass, Chapter 7: East = Embark.

WRITE HERE

Write the shortest ghost story you can. One sentence will do.

THE PRACTICE

Write the Ticket

Momort only keeps plans with a time and a place on them. Write one for this week, like a ticket.

WHAT YOU BROUGHT BACK FROM THE ROOM

Where: the bench by the water, past the green door on Mill Lane.

When: Saturday, nine o'clock, before anyone else is up.

How: on foot, the long way, with the flask and my hood down.

ONCE MORE, ON PAPER

WHERE

The exact spot

WHEN

The day and the time

HOW

How you'll get there, and what you'll take

TO TRY IN THE REAL WORLD

Write one plan for this week with a place, a day and a time. Stick it where you'll see it.

PUZZLE ONE

The Hidden Words

Every word here is yours: a word that ran through your month, someone from your Cast, a place you've been. They run forwards, backwards and slantwise. Circle them.



FIND THESE

☐ Front

☐ Month

☐ Want

☐ Wrote

☐ Keeping

☐ Remember

☐ Where

☐ Looking

☐ Started

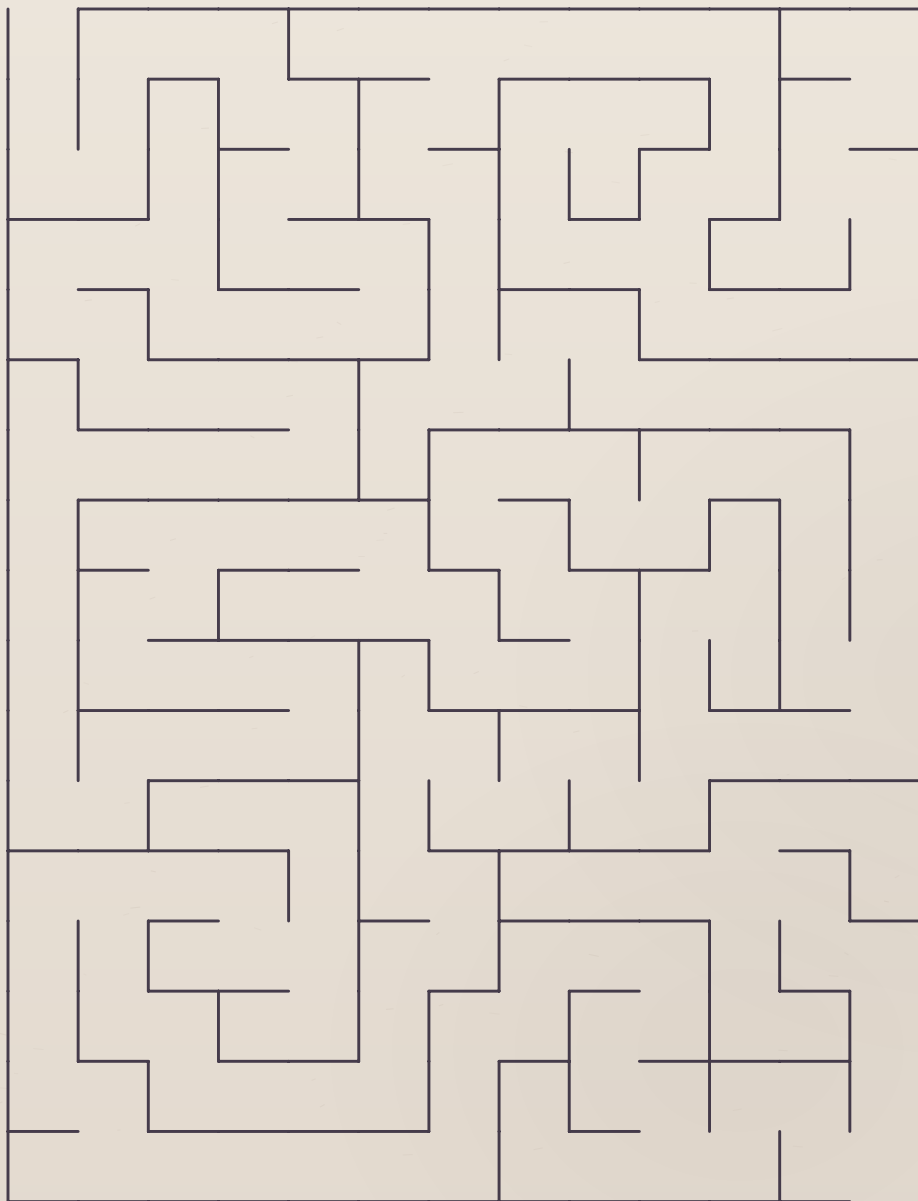
☐ Words

PUZZLE TWO

The Way Through

The Labyrinth rearranges itself every month. This is how it lay in yours. In at the top, out at the bottom, and no cheating by tearing the page.

IN



OUT

MORE PUZZLES

Puzzle: your turn

Scramble a sentence you wrote this week, or hide one of your words in a grid of letters, and leave it for someone to solve. Write your key at the foot, folded under.

WRITE HERE

Write a riddle whose answer is a pumpkin.

THE EXAMINATION

Pencil only. No looking back through the Book: the Academy would like to know what you actually noticed. Mark yourself honestly against the key on the last leaf of this section. Headmistress Thorne will know.

1. Who was in the most scenes you read this month?

- ☐ A. Wicker Eddies
- ☐ B. Professor Permancer
- ☐ C. Serenity Brown
- ☐ D. Penny Blackletter

2. Which room did the month's story visit most?

- ☐ A. The Great Hall
- ☐ B. The East Stacks
- ☐ C. The Kitchens
- ☐ D. The Vault of Doors

3. What was the moon doing on Thursday, October 1?

- ☐ A. Waning Gibbous
- ☐ B. New Moon
- ☐ C. First Quarter
- ☐ D. Waxing Crescent

4. How many nights did the Book braid for you?

- ☐ A. 29
- ☐ B. 32
- ☐ C. 31
- ☐ D. 27

5. Which scene did you read first?

- ☐ A. The wrong way to the classroom
- ☐ B. Sunday Book Jump Club
- ☐ C. Every named traveller
- ☐ D. A sentence with its coat off

Name one thing you noticed this month that never made it into the Book.

What did you walk past that you now suspect was a door?

THE ACADEMY OF THE LABYRINTH

Report Card

Wren · October 2026

Noticing

31 nights braided

DISTINCTION

Initiative

12 things made or cast

DISTINCTION

Fieldwork

12 photographs and creatures filed

DISTINCTION

Curiosity

11 rooms sat

DISTINCTION

Deeds

0 errands and dares answered

STILL OPEN

Examination

marked by you, against the key

____ / 5

The Academy doesn't hand these out. It has noted that you earned them.

♦ *Deeds: Wicker keeps a dare in his pocket for anyone who asks. It's usually a small one. Usually.*

To contest a mark

Say which, and why. Headmistress Thorne reads every one.

Headmistress Thorne

PROCTOR

In Closing

At the end of October 2026, you wrote: “Last real day of October. I read back through the month on the bus and there's more in it than I thought. The heron. The stair. The bees. The woodsmoke. None of it is anything, and all of it is the month. I want to remember that it was a month where I started looking up.”

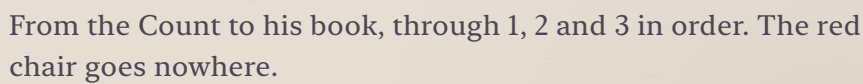
That belongs beside the days themselves. I won't make it grander. I've put thread through it so it can't wander off.

Shut it, or don't. The month keeps either way now: that was the entire point of the thread.

The Book



Map the Door Home





The Book of You (Wren) Chapter 1: October 2026

Titled for the month's story, Count Unbound.

Bound by the Book itself, which read every page twice.

Made with ReEnchanted · reenchanted.app