



**KATRIN ZIPSE**  
**MOOSLAND / LAND OF MOSS**

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“The volcanoes are still spitting fire,” Gerda says into the wind. “And I heard there are places where the ground’s so hot you could fry an egg on it.”

She shifts about on the crate with such excitement that the boat begins to rock. The older of the two fishermen raises a hand in warning, glances at her, and mutters something.

“Maybe you’d end up with jet-black feet if you walked across one of those volcanic beaches,” Gerda goes on, and this time she stays still. Only her fingers fidget with the nets piled up beside the crate in the stern. “But then I’ll just keep my socks on when I go swimming. I don’t care if it looks silly. Nobody knows me here anyway.”

She lets a hand trail in the water, then pulls it out at once, disappointed. “Blast! This is ten times colder than the Baltic. You couldn’t swim in this. There must be icebergs around already. And polar bears! One might drift past on his ice floe any minute. Imagine that!”

A quick laugh, lost in the vastness of the fjord, and then Gerda falls quiet. Only the wind remains, and the fishermen’s heavy breathing, the thud of the oars as they strike the water, the splash as they rise again, the trickle of seawater running off.

“Come on, girl, say something for once,” Gerda calls into the silence and shakes her arm.

She looks down at her worn coat sleeve grasped in Gerda’s hand. The frayed hem, the wool so thin the wind whistles through it, no longer convincing anyone it was ever

warm. She pulls her arm free of Gerda's grip and buries her fingers in her coat pockets. She forces her eyes to the coast, where neither a house nor a tree is to be seen, only meadows and stony beaches, mountains bare and twisted, their rock frozen mid-descent.

Round a bend, a man is standing on the shore. He waves to them. He's the first person she's seen on this coast. He rolls up his trouser legs and drags a boat into the surf. Two small horses wait on the beach behind him. The man climbs aboard. The older fisherman jerks his head towards him and says something. She makes out the words "Gerda Grunow."

"I think he's mine," Gerda breathes beside her.

And after a moment, as they both stare at the man in the boat: "He's saddled the horses! Wow! I haven't ridden a horse for ages."

A small squeak, pure delight.

The man rows quickly, pulling with all his strength. The sleeves of his white shirt are rolled up to his elbows.

"He's a bit on the skinny side," Gerda says suddenly, her voice gone small. "But he doesn't look half-starved, does he?"

The fishermen bring the boats alongside. Gerda turns towards her, uncertain. The younger fisherman hauls Gerda's suitcase out of the crate in the bow and tosses it to the man in the white shirt. Gerda sighs and stands, so quickly the boat rocks again. It bangs hard against the other. The fishermen curse. Gerda sways and reaches for support. She yanks her hands out of her coat pockets and holds Gerda steady, not letting go until the boat settles once more on the water.

"Thanks," Gerda whispers, drawing in a deep breath. "All right then."

With a great leap she jumps into the other boat, colliding with the man in the shirt, who nearly loses his balance. Together they crash onto the rowing bench.

"Welcome, you big fish," the man says with a laugh, righting himself with Gerda still in his lap.

The two fishermen laugh as well.

"Thank you," Gerda stammers, scrambling to the other bench. She sits down and, with a stern look, says, "I'll write to you. And you'll write back, won't you?"

Her voice is already steadier.

She nods, vaguely.

The man rows towards the shore. All that can be seen of Gerda now is her back, bolt upright in the boat.

The fishermen set course once more for the mouth of the fjord. She looks down at her feet. Water has sloshed over the side and swirls about her shoes. The thin leather is quickly soaked through.

The fjord widens as they near the mouth. A cold wind blows in from the open sea. She pulls her coat tighter and huddles into herself.

The shoreline has become nothing but colour. Dark and light green. Black. And grey.

Sheer cliffs jut into the water. At their base lies a narrow cove. There stands another lone man. As they draw nearer he pushes his hat back on his head and wades into the water. The fishermen row towards him.

Among the great black rocks strewn in the shallows, the fishermen hold their oars flat and call something out to the man. He ploughs through the surf and shouts back cheerfully. The fishermen answer with laughter.

When the man reaches the boat, the water is up to his thighs. He runs a hand through his beard and regards her with kindly eyes. The younger fisherman fetches her rucksack from the crate and hands it across. The man swings it onto his back and looks at her expectantly. She slips off her shoes, winds the laces round her hand and swings her legs over the side, ready to slide into the water. But the man catches her, hoists her onto his shoulder and wades off with her. The fishermen turn the boat. She feels sick, perhaps from hanging head down.

She clings to the laces in her hand and looks into the water. It is clear right to the bottom. Tiny fish dart about the man's knees.

On a great stone at the shore the man sets her down. He wrings the water from his trouser legs and empties his rubber shoes. She crouches on the stone and pulls hers back on. The man waits until she has tied the laces, then goes on. On unsteady legs she follows him, over the black stone blocks with water pooled between them. Further back, where the stones give way to pebbles, a rowing boat lies pulled up, smaller than the one she came in. Beyond, the rocks slope more gently and are patched with grass. There the man waits again. Before she has reached the boat he is already beginning the climb.

No path is to be seen; he makes his way straight up the slope. She hurries to catch him, trying to place her feet in his tracks, but his stride is longer than hers. Again and again she misses her footing on the scree and slides a little way down. Grabbing at the long grasses growing between the rock crevices, she hauls herself back up. The man takes no notice and soon he is far ahead.

A few gulls rise from the cliffs, circling above her with shrill cries. She ducks her head and climbs faster. The birds follow until she reaches the plateau, then wheel away.

She stops and looks back towards the sea. The boat is already far out, tiny now against the endless blue.

Across the high ground the wind bites even more sharply. No trees, no bushes to break its force. Everything open, bare, without a hiding place. Wherever she turns there's no house, not even a hut, nothing. Nor a path leading towards one. Only herself and the man, striding across the plateau with long, sweeping steps.

She tightens the knot of her headscarf and hurries on. Moss is growing now between the rocks. It's so soft that it startles her when she steps on it, as though all the solid ground has gone. She jumps from slab to slab, over moss that spreads wider and wider, forcing leaps almost too long for her.

At the edge of the plateau the man waits again. Here the high ground slopes into grass, then on into a wide plain. Beyond rise the mountains, hulking and round-backed, patched with snow.

And in the middle of the plain the farm, as if flung onto the lush green. A house, a fenced vegetable garden, a stable. Washing lines strung before the house, trousers and shirts and skirts near horizontal in the wind.

There is no road down there either. Only a trampled track leading from the stable, vanishing in the grass. A little further from the house she spots another building. It looks as though it has been pressed up from the earth itself, more mound than house, overgrown with grass.

She sees the animals too. Horses and cows grazing close to the house. No sheep in sight, but she knows they keep them. One hundred and forty sheep, two cows, ten horses.

The man is already marching on. She follows him down the slope, across knee-high hummocks of grass, packed close together. The furrows between them are narrower than a footstep and deeper than they look. When she slips from a mound on her smooth soles she has to take care not to twist an ankle. The man walks across the hummocked ground with his rubber shoes as steadily if it were asphalt. The gap between them grows.

A fence of stone and barbed wire encloses the farm and the meadow by the house. There the man waits once more and holds the gate open for her.

On this side the ground lies level. She keeps pace behind the man along a small brook. Dandelions and buttercups bloom at the water's edge, drawing a yellow trail through the grass.

There is no one is to be seen at the house, even as they come nearer. If the washing weren't strung on the lines you might think the place deserted.

Then a sudden cackling. She has almost reached the dwelling. Loud, agitated, with a flurry of wings as feathers spread. She gasps. Gooseflesh runs down her arms. Chicken skin.

She has to get away.

She turns and makes for the fence, walking faster and faster along the brook, back the way she came.

A shout from the distance.

She halts, bewildered. She has forgotten why she is here. Forgotten how she came here at all.

The man. He calls again, louder this time. He hauled her out of the boat. He jerks his head towards the house, then goes on.

She scans the meadow but sees no chicken anywhere. Nor does she hear cackling now, only the wind. She turns back and follows him. What else can she do?

Closer up, the house had seemed built of stone.

Then of wood.

Now, standing before the porch, she sees its façade is corrugated iron. She runs her hand across it. Cold, thin metal, like the Nissen huts. How could that keep any warmth in?

The man mutters something and turns the corner of the house. She lingers at the porch, uncertain whether to follow. After all, this is the entrance.

The man does not return.

She peers round the corner where he has gone. When she doesn't see him she moves on, hesitating, hugging the side wall of the house.

The cackling.

It comes again. Nearer. And angry.

She presses herself to the wall, holding her breath, rooted to the spot. Gooseflesh bristling on her arms.

The man reappears. He is crossing the yard behind the house, a chicken in his hands. It stares at her with its cold, pebble eyes. The man nods and disappears with it into the stable.

Something strikes the window beside her. She jerks her head round, sees a flash of fair hair behind the glass, only for an instant, then it's gone.

The man returns without the chicken. He shuts the stable door and crosses the yard again. She pulls herself from the wall and runs to meet him. At the back of the house there is another door, narrower than the front, without a porch. The man pushes it open and lets her in. Four years, four months and twenty-three days she has been on the road.

Once the man closes the door all is still. The air is no longer raw, but softened, without the endless wind. It smells of stable and boiled fish.

He sets her rucksack on a long bench and motions for her to take off her shoes. They are still wet from the boat, the soles already coming away. She must get them dry. She looks about for newspaper to stuff into them, but on the concrete floor beneath the bench she sees only leather slippers and empty pails, and a basket of stockings with neatly folded rags on top. On the wall hang felted jumpers, leather jackets, and work trousers made of heavy drill.

The man takes her shoes and places them on a rack. The four pairs of rubber boots beside them are clumsy, caked with mud above the ankle. Against them her half-shoes look like dancing pumps, small as if made for a child.

He reaches for her coat. She shakes her head and digs her hands deeper into the pockets. He shrugs, rummages in the basket beneath the bench, and finally produces a pair of thick brown woollen socks. He holds them out. She pulls them over her damp stockings and follows him into the dim corridor. The walls are panelled in dark wood, the floor laid with planks. In the centre a narrow staircase climbs steeply to the floor above. From a door further back a light falls.

Here the smell of boiled fish is stronger.

Three men sit at a long table, staring at her. At the head, the oldest, broad-shouldered and heavy. The other two facing each other on the benches are much younger, their faces narrower, but their shoulders just as wide. One has the same thick mop of blond hair, slicked back with pomade. The other's is dark brown, almost black, like that of the woman who is at the stove. Hers is plaited into a braid that reaches down to her waist.

The family.

Farmer, farmer's wife, two sons.

So she has been told.

And a farmhand. He is the one who brought her here.

The woman glances at her briefly, then turns back to the pan she is stirring. The men at the table don't move.

Only when the farmhand steers her across the threshold do they get up, awkwardly. He guides her to the farmer. She shakes his hand and makes a small curtsy. She can't sink very low; otherwise Gerda's skirt will slip from her hips. The farmer nods and says something, just a few words. He doesn't smile. None of them smile. She does not curtsy before the two sons; they're scarcely older than she is. The dark-haired one may even be younger. He shakes her hand and whispers, "How are you?" so softly she can pretend not to hear. The blond one stares at her wide-eyed, brushing a strand of hair hastily from his forehead before offering his hand. Red blotches spread across his neck.

The woman taps her scraper against the rim of the pan and beckons her over.

"Inkibjörk," she says, pointing to herself. "Joun. Oulawür. Skuhli. Haltdor."

With the scraper she indicates the four men in turn: farmer, sons, and farmhand. Then she presses six plates into her hands.

The woman's cheeks are flushed, her skin entirely smooth. She stands at the head of the table, ladling fish and sauce, potatoes and turnips onto the plate. The men have already helped themselves, great heaps piled before them. They saw thick slices from a dark loaf, butter them, and begin to eat. No one says grace. The woman pushes the full plate towards her and pours milk into a cup. Only now does she realise how thirsty she is. She drains it in one go and sets the empty cup down more forcefully than she meant. It bangs against the bare wood, and they all turn to look. Embarrassed, she wipes the milk from her lips. The woman gives her the jug to refill her cup. She smiles thanks, fills

her cup again, and drinks almost all of it before setting it down more carefully this time beside her plate.

Not a word is spoken. In the silence over the table she hears knives scraping, the smacking of lips, the sound of swallowing. She hears the rumble of her stomach too. She has eaten nothing since early morning.

The farmhand sits opposite. He shovels food down so fast a lump of potato drops from his mouth and sticks in his beard. He plucks it free, pops it back in, and pushes the next forkful in. Chewing, he nods towards her full plate. She ought to eat too.

She doesn't. Hunched in her coat, she crouches on the bench. The milk sits heavy in her stomach.

The blond boy beside her is watching. Out of the corner of her eye she sees him forget his meal entirely, holding a loaded fork motionless in his hand. The woman sucks in her breath sharply to make him go on eating. The dark-haired one beside the farmhand bursts out laughing.

She lowers her eyes to her plate. The pallid fish. The oily sauce in which it floats. The dark-haired one keeps laughing. He doesn't stop until the blond one kicks him under the table.

The woman raises her voice. When she looks up she realises the words are meant for her. Impatiently, the woman points at her fish. She wants her to eat. Surely the woman is already wondering what use she will be here, looking so frail. Whether she is fit for work on the farm at all. Perhaps they already regret bringing her. What is she doing here anyway? She is as thin as an asparagus spear. And those don't grow here.

She bends over her plate and plunges her fork into the fish. It crumbles into fragments, sinking into the sauce. She gathers them on her fork and pushes them into her mouth, swallowing without chewing. A bone lodges in her throat. She gags and breaks into violent coughing. The others look up in alarm. Her eyes are watering. The bone won't move up or down. It is choking her. Her breath whistles. Cold sweat on her forehead. She is afraid she is going to suffocate.

The blond boy sets down his fork and slaps her between the shoulder blades so hard she pitches forward. The bone shifts and slides lower. She takes in a gasp of air. The woman thrusts a full cup of milk into her hands. She drains it in a gulp while the others laugh in relief. The blond boy does not laugh. Silently he cuts a slice of bread and lays it between their plates. She cannot tell whether he cut it for himself or for her, and she doesn't take it, though she would like to.

At the table all is quiet again. They go on eating. The blond one has new blotches on his neck. She picks at the potatoes and turnips, chewing for a long time and swallowing small mouthfuls. She leaves the fish untouched, though the woman frowns across at her.



She needs to pee, but the meal drags on. As soon as the plates are empty, they heap them again. Restless, she shifts on the bench, wondering how she will find the toilet.

At least they are speaking now, no longer staring at her. The dark-haired son chatters at the farmhand, cheerful and excited. With his hands he measures out lengths, a metre, more, a whole arm span in the end. The farmhand listens and nods now and then, but most of the time his eyes are on the farmer, who is talking with the woman and the blond boy. Their conversation interests him more. The dark-haired boy doesn't notice because he is so absorbed in his tale. His eyes are wide as if in amazement at his own words. It must be something important; his voice rises high. She thinks she catches the word "America" and starts. What has he to do with America? But she makes out nothing more of his torrent of words, and just then the farmer slams his hand on the table, the sound reverberating. The boy stops mid-sentence.

"America, America," the farmer mocks, his voice sharp and harsh. The boy presses his lips together. The others fall silent too, bending low over their plates. After a few curt words the farmer lets his son be and resumes his meal. The others pick up their talk again. Only the dark-haired one says nothing more. His face grim, he stares at his plate, and when at last he looks up it is through them all, into the distance. She squeezes her thighs together and curses the three glasses of milk.

At length the pans and pots are empty. The woman rises and signals for her to clear the table. The dark-haired son pushes himself up from the bench and stomps from the kitchen. The woman gathers bread and butter and vanishes through the narrow door beside the stove. The men pick at their teeth. Hurriedly she stacks the plates, scraped clean, except the top one where her fish still lies. She wants to carry them to the sink, but the farmhand catches her by the skirt, halting her mid-step. With his free hand he reaches over, seizes the bread the blond boy has cut, and dips it into her fish. She stands beside him, legs pressed tight, stiff as a rod. She is about to wet herself.

Only when he has scraped up the last morsel does the farmhand release her. She rushes to the sink, sets down the plates, and runs in her socks to the back door, across the yard, behind the stable. She yanks down her tights and knickers, hikes up her skirt and coat, puffed out by the wind, and crouches.

The woman waits at the back door, a pair of leather slippers in her hand. She is to put them on and come. She pulls off the thick socks and slips into the slippers. They are far too big. She has to curl her toes to keep them on.

At the side of the stable there is a shed of wooden slats, no bigger than a cupboard, stuck against the concrete wall. The woman unlatches the door. A sharp smell wafts out. She recoils, but the woman grips her arm and pulls her closer. Holding her breath, she stands in the doorway and looks at the knee-high box with a hole in the



middle, the bucket of ash with a small shovel stuck in it. The basket of moss, right beside the hole.

The woman squeezes past her into the shed and fills the shovel. Slowly she lets the ash trickle through the hole in the box. It dusts the air. She looks at her searchingly, as though to make sure she understands what this is. She nods. The woman plants the shovel back in the bucket and steps outside. Now she is to go in.

She shakes her head, she no longer needs go.

The woman doesn't care. Firmly she pushes her into the privy and shuts the door. Inside it is dim. The only light seeps through the cracks between the slats. She sits down beside the basket of moss and presses her nose to a gap, drawing in the fresh air from outside. From here she sees the woman. She is pacing up and down the yard, her braid tousled by the wind.

She counts to twenty. Then she pulls on her thick socks again, so the slippers fit better, and steps out.

In the kitchen the woman stokes the stove and fills the enamel bowl in the sink with hot water from the tank. Then she leaves her alone. She is to do the washing up. Bowls have been added to the plates, scraped clean save for a few white rims.

While she washes the dishes she hears the men outside talking. They sound cheerier than they were at table. She recognises the farmhand's deep voice and the farmer's rough one. One of the sons is there as well. She cannot tell which. It will be the blond one. When she has put the crockery away in the dresser they drift off.

The wall clock shows almost ten and it is still bright as day, a noon light.

She sits on the bench and lays her forehead on her arms. The tabletop smells oily, of fish. From somewhere she thinks she hears the woman's voice and raises her head. But there is only the ticking of the clock, and outside the wind. She lets her head sink back onto her arms and closes her eyes. The wind wafts Sola's steps into the room. She feels them at her back and keeps perfectly still.

Something brushes her elbow. She starts up in fright. The woman is standing beside her, wanting her to come.

Drowsy, she hauls herself up the steep stairs. At the top, three doors open off the small landing. The woman opens the one on the left and pushes her inside. It is small, a garret room with a sloping roof and walls of wooden slats. The bed under the eaves runs the full length. Beside the headboard a window, a dark curtain stirring before it. On the chest below stand a wash set and a chamber pot. Her rucksack leans against the bed, shabby and out of place. The woman pulls open the drawers of the chest and makes an inviting gesture towards the three empty ones. She nods and does not move. She wants the woman to go first. But the woman has no intention of leaving; she sits on the bed and fusses with the buckles of the rucksack. In a trice she is upon her, snatching the rucksack from her hands and opening it herself. With her back to the woman, she kneels before

the chest, laying out her clothes piece by piece and stowing them in the top drawer. A vest, three pairs of knickers, two pairs of stockings and the second blouse, five handkerchiefs and the thin jumper from the Red Cross. She owns nothing more, however far the woman bends forward to peer into the rucksack. Inside are only a toothbrush and nightdress, her identity card and the “Hints” from the Agricultural Society they were given before the crossing.

She sets the nightdress and toothbrush on the chest and the rucksack in the bottom drawer, then shuts it with a shove. The woman is to see she has finished and go at last. But the woman pays her no heed. Quite oblivious to her, she sits on the edge of the bed and strokes the eiderdown with her hand. Strokes to and fro.

She waits, trembling with impatience.

At last the woman rouses herself, throws her a tired look and pushes up from the bed. As she rises she stretches out an arm towards her to run a hand over her hair. She ducks away and drops onto the bed, at the foot, not where the woman had been sitting.

The woman does not go. She just takes the chamber pot from the chest and presses it into her hands. She herself takes the jug. Together they go downstairs again. In the kitchen the woman fills the jug with hot water and sets it at the foot of the stairs. Then she shoos her outside.

The brothers are standing in the yard. They stop talking when she steps out and look across, curious. She tries to hide the chamber pot under her coat. The dark-haired one grins because she cannot conceal it. The woman leads her to a dented oil drum beside the privy, lifts the stone from the lid and opens it. The smell bites. The drum is almost brim-full of urine. The woman takes the pot from her and makes as if to empty it into the drum. The brothers’ eyes burn in her back. The woman hands the pot back. She tucks it under her arm and runs into the house, up the stairs, into her room, and shuts the door that has no lock. She shoves the chamber pot far under the bed and takes off Sola’s coat. Gently she strokes the worn rabbit fur on the collar.

The front door bangs. Steps come up the stairs. She hangs the coat on the hook behind the door and jumps into bed, hiding under the covers and closing her eyes as though asleep. The steps halt on the threshold. After a while the woman steps softly into the room and fusses at the chest. Cautiously she peeps out from under the blanket. The woman has set the jug in the basin and is taking off her cardigan, folding it and laying it on the chest beside the nightdress. She shuts her eyes again. The woman closes the window and goes to the door. And stops once more. Perhaps she stands in front of Sola’s coat and strokes the rabbit fur on the collar. Then she goes at last.

She breathes out.

For the first time in weeks she is alone. No strange breathing beside her, and no familiar breathing either, no body she knows, and none she doesn’t. There is only herself.

She floats on her back upon the sea. Her body rises and falls with the waves and does not move at all. As if anchored to the seabed, at a depth no one will ever reach. She smells the icy water and the salt in the air. Then the images roll in and break over her.

She goes under. Drowns. Suffocates. Burns. Drifts away.

She tears her eyes open. The room is still light, though it must be close to midnight. Everything here is strange: the walls, the furniture, the feel of the mattress. The quiet, the light, the wind. The air.

She gets out of bed, pulls the curtain aside and pushes the window wide open. Cold night air streams into the room. The horses stand together on the meadow, motionless, heads bowed. Stocky animals, much smaller than the horses she is used to. Thick cloud covers the sky, yet where it breaks it is still blue, and a radiant yellow light lies over the plateau. She sets off. Three steps to the door, three to the window, the distance never ends. She walks miles like this and does not tire. Her legs move of their own accord. And the images that hunt her fade until they are only empty surfaces.

Outside it is quiet now. Even the wind has dropped. Only now and then a golden plover calls. A single cry. Then silence again.

The woman is standing in the room. Her black hair has fallen across her face. Her nightdress gleams in the dark doorway. She speaks loudly, as if she had to wake her. She is wide awake. And on her guard. She is an animal that never sleeps again.

She does not know what the woman wants here.

She has to drag herself back before she reaches the room. The journey runs through landscapes no one knows any more. The woman is still talking. With a pained face she points to the thin wooden wall that divides this room from the one next door. That is where she sleeps with her husband. Or rather, she was trying to sleep there. But the floorboards creak. Barefoot, the woman stamps on the boards and shows her how loud it creaks when you tread on them.

Behind the wall the farmer begins to curse; he is awake now too. The woman shepherds her to the bed and tosses her the nightdress. Under the woman's impatient gaze she slips out of her skirt and blouse, pulls the nightdress over her shift and crawls into bed. The woman shuts the window again and draws the curtain. She closes her eyes and turns to the wall. She hears Sola's coat tap softly against the door as the woman leaves the room.

The bed behind the thin wall creaks. The woman has lain down again. A quick whisper, a yawn, then quiet.

She opens her eyes. The light in the room is pallid now. With her fingertips she traces the grain in the wooden wall, follows the grimaces hidden there, and falls asleep. Only for a short while. She starts up again, eyes wide, gasping, as if something were sitting on her chest. A night demon, an incubus, that has crawled up from the depths, a grinning once-upon-a-time.

She has to get out.

She throws on Sola's coat and slips from the room, down the stairs. Every creaking step makes her start. She stops, listens, then scurries on when nothing stirs, slips into the leather slippers in the hall and runs out of the house. She runs, flees across the meadow, startling the dreaming horses. She stumbles over the hummocks, trips in the furrows and hauls herself up again.

Are the images still hunting her? She doesn't even know. She only has to keep on. Every trace of tiredness has left her; she is glassily awake and runs towards the plateau. The clouds have melted away, the sky above is wide and blue. On the horizon the sun explodes into rose-pink shreds.

She does not stop until she reaches the cliff edge. The sky is flaming red now and the sea below glows like molten iron. She searches for a dark speck in motion, a ship or a boat, somewhere out there. There is nothing. Or she cannot see it in the glare.

With the tips of her thumb and forefinger she makes a tiny square you can see more sharply through. However long she peers through it, no ship, no boat enters her view.

She is not getting away from here.

Perhaps it is not true anyway, and you do not see more sharply through the square. She no longer knows who told her that. She cannot ask anyone; there is no one left.