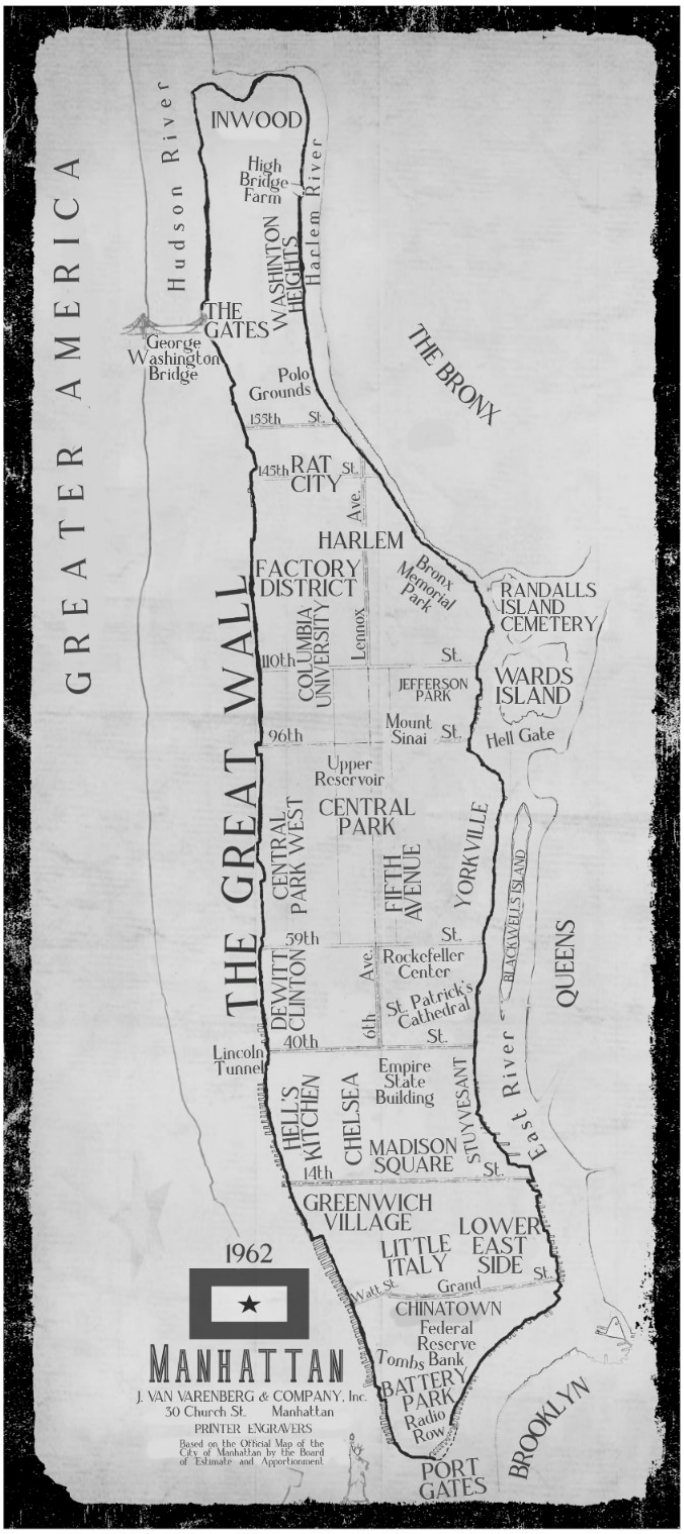
SAMPLE




GREATER AMERICA
Hudson River
INWOOD
High Bridge Farm
Harlem River
WASHINTON HEIGHTS
THE GATES
George Washington Bridge
THE BRONX
Polo Grounds
155th St.
145th RAT CITY St.
Ave.
HARLEM
FACTORY DISTRICT
Bronx Memorial Park
RANDALLS ISLAND CEMETERY
THE GREAT WALL
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
Lennox
110th St.
JEFFERSON PARK
WARDS ISLAND
Mount Sinai St.
Hell Gate
96th
Upper Reservoir
CENTRAL PARK
CENTRAL PARK WEST
FIFTH AVENUE
YORKVILLE
BLACKWELL'S ISLAND
59th St.
DEWITT CLINTON
Ave.
Rockefeller Center
St. Patrick's Cathedral
6th
40th St.
QUEENS
Lincoln Tunnel
Empire State Building
HELL'S KITCHEN
CHELSEA
MADISON SQUARE
STUYVESANT
East River
14th St.
GREENWICH VILLAGE
LOWER EAST SIDE
LITTLE ITALY
Watt St.
Grand St.
CHINATOWN
Federal Reserve
Tombs
Bank
BATTERY PARK
Radio Row
1962
MANHATTAN
J. VAN VARENBERG & COMPANY, Inc.
50 Church St. Manhattan
PRINTER ENGRAVERS
Based on the Official Map of the City of Manhattan by the Board of Estimate and Apportionment
PORT GATES
BROOKLYN

ONE

There are three laws of Manhattan in 1952. This is the only one that matters: Never, ever go beyond the city walls.

Flickers of light snow swirl in the moonlight on the breeze around us. My belly growls and there's no way to get warm. I jam my numb hands into my pockets and bounce as much as feels safe in a rickety sniper's nest two-hundred-feet up on top of the George Washington Bridge. Max makes a face like he's about to have a heart attack.

"Salem, you're a great girl and everything, but if you don't stop that I guarantee you right now I'm gonna throw you in the river," he says, all prickly.

Too cold to want to peer out from under the scarf wrapped around the lower half of my face, I glare at him and stamp my foot on the platform with a satisfying crunch of wood.

"Call me 'girl' again," I say.

Max rolls his eyes and I turn back to watch the darkness at the other end of the bridge. He can't see the smile under my scarf.

I take out my pocket notebook and flip it up and make an extra entry: '2200 zero'. I used to write it all out: zero light / zero movement / zero sound. After a while, you stop all that. You do the notes every half hour, but you don't have to write it all out. When you're stuck up here freezing and hungry while everyone else is tucked up in bed, you find ways to conserve energy. It's that or ask Max to snuggle in.

Not a terrible plan.

The notebook goes away. Manhattan is still and silent behind us, but for foot patrols with nervous dogs and the distant clatter of horses. Six million people hold their breath and wait for sunrise. The great steel gates below us, suspended from the bridge's easternmost tower, creak and rattle. New Jersey opposite squats on the horizon, darker than the night sky. There are no lights there. No anything. In the glittery black water of the Hudson River between this world and that lie long-dead battleships, the frost on their slanted radio towers sparkling in the light of the full moon.

My eyes, peering out over my scarf, meet Max's again for a moment. I look away first. I always do. The Guard's no place for silly crushes.

Screams come.

Definitely human.

Definitely from the other side of the bridge.

Screams like I haven’t heard for a long time.

I lift my rifle, a hand-me-down, bolt-action Springfield, and press my eye to the scope. The metal is cold, but so am I. The screams come again, carried on the wind. No words yet. Moonlight catches the rusted edges of wrecks scattered across the George Washington Bridge: cars, buses, tanks, a P-47 Thunderbolt with both wings torn off and the torso crushed like a tin can against a pillar. The pilot’s body will be no more than bones now. At our end of the bridge are the Gates, Manhattan at mine and Max's backs. At the other end, the rest of what was once the United States of America sits in pitch darkness. Zero light. Zero movement. Zero hope. It went dark ten years ago and will stay that way for another thousand.

Manhattan stands.

Then, from the darkness, crawls a small, screaming shadow.

“I see something,” I say. My finger finds the trigger.

Max whispers behind me, fear in his voice, “What have you seen?” He raises his rifle and takes his spot beside me.

Can he see me trembling?

“Near the three-car pile-up,” I say, and he knows exactly where I mean. Night after night of sitting up here, you get to know the bridge like the color of your father’s eyes.

“Can't get a good look,” he says. “Is he hurt?”

I glance at Max, drawn to the neat semi-circular pattern of the scar across his otherwise kind-looking face. His eyes meet mine. They share my panic.

Orders say kill the wounded.

Orders are king.

“Check,” Max says, failing to sound authoritative. He’s a year older than me, twenty to my nineteen, and he tries to play the bossy card sometimes because of it.

I look back down the scope. “He’s too far away.” The shadow of the man disappears within the other shadows as he stumbles across the bridge, coming straight for the gates beneath us. As the shadow gets closer, I can make out that it’s a man and, I’m fairly sure, he’s wearing a long black coat of the Manhattan

Guard uniform.

“Max,” I say, “he might be one of us.”

“There’s no way,” Max says, determined. “No way.”

“He looks like a soldier. It looks like our uniform.”

“What would one of us be doing out there?”

Never, ever go outside the walls.

The man on the other tower, opposite us on the other side of the gate, doesn’t move to look. He mustn’t have heard. Drunk, maybe. Lots of old timers spend their waking hours that way. Dad always said there were only two ways to take what happened to the world: you fight or you quit, get angry or get drunk. Dad doesn’t drink.

Me, I follow orders.

Max takes out a goofy little pocket telescope and extends it like a pirate looking for land. “He’s got a black coat on,” he says. “Could be anything though. Lots of black coats out there, I bet.”

“No way,” I say. “That’s one of ours. He’s one of ours.”

The visitor’s screams come again from across the bridge.

He has been followed.

A sound begins like an air raid siren, a low, powerful note that carries all the way from the edge of Greater America to where Max and I stand at the only opening in the Great Wall of Manhattan. The sound grows louder and higher and my heart drops into my boots and sweat prickles on my back as the sound becomes a howl. Tears sting my eyes. My toes curl down in my boots.

“Wolves,” I whisper, and grind my teeth. I hate even the word.

“I don’t see them,” Max says, his eye glued to his telescope.

I try to look brave, but I’m not. I try to hide that I’m scared, but I’ve never been this scared in all my life. I can’t control my trembling and there’s a tightness around my chest like someone just landed a lasso around me and yanked hard.

A second howl begins as the first trails off. Then a third. Then a fourth. The guard in the opposite tower scrambles for his flare gun. Below, patrol dogs whine and bark. Children cry from within the black monoliths of the nearest apartment blocks, from behind their blackout curtains. The wolves know we’re here, of course, but we don’t want to flaunt it to every set of blue eyes across

the Hudson River. North and south, up and down the length of the Great Wall at intervals of a few hundred yards, flares burst up, trailing an arc of bright sparks over the Hudson, sprinkling the black water with red.

“Standard procedure,” I say, steeling myself. “We’re fine. Happens all the time. None of them have got in for years.”

Max, trying hard to buy my act, says, “It's fine, isn’t it? Captain Cabrera told us to expect to see ‘em sometimes just watching from across the bridge.”

I nod. He’s nodding. We’re a couple of frightened sparrows in our nest. We never actually have seen them out there until now.

The notebook comes back out. My mom’s old watch - far too delicate for soldiering, but it’s all I have - says 2216.

‘2216 human one contact.’

I’ve only ever seen a wolf once. Just once with my own two eyes. Otherwise, it's all been photographs and the posters in storefronts and scattered around the State. The poster of the wolf tearing the screaming baby from its mother's clutching hands - ‘Your children will be next!’ in big red letters - that stays with you. No one’s managed to get a moving picture of one, not one time in the ten years since they first appeared. Or at least, no one’s ever done that and got the film to Manhattan. There’s a couple of photographs, blurred, shot in a panic, but there’s not a lot to look at. So the only wolf I have in my memory is the one that took our mother from us. I was nine years old when they appeared one horrible night in 1942 on the other side of the country. Us people who have seen them and lived, we haven’t forgotten. The kids born since then, they don’t know. They might never know, if they’re lucky. But we can’t forget. Nine years old and hiding under the kitchen table when a hulking, blue-eyed demon bursts through our door and rips Mom out of our lives forever.

Some things you have to see for yourself. You can’t read about them in stories. No one can explain them to you.

I don’t want to see a wolf again. Not ever.

The man on the bridge keeps heading for the gates, a small, dark blob bouncing between the wrecks. As he gets nearer, his screams become words. Prayers. “Please, God!” he screams. “Save me!”

“Is he hurt?” I say, pulling my scarf down around my neck. “Max? Can you see blood?”

Orders are king.

“Hard to tell, but… Wait,” Max says. “No.” My heart skips a beat “No bites. No blood. No nothing.”

“Can I look?” The brass pocket telescope is warm from Max’s touch, even through my woolen gloves. When I find the visitor through it, my belly turns. There’s no blood, that’s true, but his face… I’ve never seen fear like it, not in a long time. His face is bone-thin and white. He’s got that starved out look men and women have on the streets, in faces peeking out of alleyways, all teeth and big eyes because everything else has shrunk away. Is that a neighborhood scar on his face? I can’t be sure. I’ve seen corpses more suited to running, but this man moves fast.

Everything tells me he’s one of us, but that can’t be.

Never go outside.

It’s punishable by death. It’s unheard of. It’s not Orders.

The man looks back every few steps. He’s nearly halfway across the bridge. He must know they won’t stop chasing. A human out in Greater America is a rare delicacy.

“We have to help,” I say, slinging my rifle over my back.

“Salem, no,” Max says, his eyes practically popping out of his head. “We have to keep these gates shut. That’s it. That’s the job.”

“He’ll die,” I say, raising my voice. “I won’t just sit here and watch.”

The man’s cries come again, as if he’s arguing his case to Max. “Let me in!” he screams. “Save me, you bastards! I’m one of you!”

“I’m not letting those monsters tear him apart while we just sit here and do nothing,” I say. I poke a finger in Max’s chest. “We stick by our people.”

What was I saying about orders again?

The howls come once more, terrible and long and low, freezing me to the spot. They sound closer than before. Towards the end of the bridge, where it joins New Jersey and leads into the dark, there appear faint pin pricks of light.

Pale blue dots.

The wolves’ glowing eyes.

“Oh, God,” Max says. “It’s a whole pack.”

“Seven,” I say, finding the lights with the telescope. “No. Eight. Just the eyes. I can’t see how big they are.”

“They’ll be big,” Max says. "There's nothing bigger out there."

The mass around the eyes begins to form.

“They’re getting closer,” I say.

To have your entire life arranged around a threat you’ve only ever seen once, it’s a strange thing. I don’t want to cry, but a tear runs down my cheek.

The glow of their eyes moves, darting in and out of one another, highlighting the edges of the ruins on the bridge.

“Salem, what do we do?” Max says. He looks down at the roadway below. His voice trembles. “They’re coming.”

"Manhattan stands," I say, the prayer of our people. “I’m going to open the gates.”

TWO

I wrap the strap of my rifle around my arm as if someone might snatch it away. The weight of the rifle in my hands makes it easier to look. The dark shapes below are so close there’s no need for the telescope. Max watches me.

The devils crawl in and out of the darkness, two-by-two crossing the George Washington Bridge. Their fur is long and their manes thick. The eerie blue glow of their narrow eyes strikes the icy fog from their hot breath, spotlighting them. They move quietly, like confident little blue gasps of hell. You’ve never seen such a blue before. You can't make it with paint. The posters don’t come close.

“Orders are orders,” I say, not looking at Max, “but people are people. If he’s not bitten and he’s not scratched, he’s still people.”

The blue light of the wolves’ eyes slips over and around and between the wrecked cars on the bridge, advancing steadily. The slogans from the posters all flood back.

‘No humanity!’

‘Not one more wolf!’

‘Manhattan depends on you!’

“I’ll shut the gates and the gates will hold,” I say, which sounds like it would go well on one of those posters.

Pray for me that all my rounds are genuine silver. There are rumors we’re running out. Some guards were caught selling their silver on the black market. The mob, people say, is trying to buy up power in the city through silver. After ten years of peace, not even the threat of the wolves can stop people trading away our only defense. A baby starving in your arms weighs more than a million killers you can't see.

And there are more than a million out there. That’s what the experts are saying. Ten million. Twenty million. Out there, it’s all wolf country now.

The man below screams with renewed conviction. “Let me in!” and “Please!” drift up on the air.

“There’s nothing we can do for him,” Max says. “No way, Salem.” His voice has gone up an octave and he can’t speak without shaking his head.

“He doesn’t look wounded.” My face gets warm and my vision darkens, tunnels down.

This always happens before I do something stupid. My brother, Judah, tells me to take a deep breath when he sees me like this. But he’s not here and Max doesn’t know me as well as I wish he did.

“We can’t open these gates for anyone. I don’t care if it’s the mayor himself or my mother down there,” Max says. He puts a hand on my shoulder. “This is our only job, Say. We keep the gates closed. That's the rule.”

“Our job is to protect our people.”

I lean against the low wall and look down at the thin, stumbling figure. He looks up and his eyes meet mine. He stumbles to a stop. A big grin crosses his face, a now-I’m-safe grin.

“Hey!” he calls. “Hey!”

Max says to me, “If he draws some of the wolves in, we might be able to shoot a couple.”

“He’s on our side,” I say.

Loyalty counts for nothing if you throw it away at the first sign of trouble.

“He’s not on our side of the wall,” Max says. “That’s it, Salem. That's all that matters.”

I thought I knew this boy in front of me. Now, I’m not so sure.

“He’s not the enemy," I say. Bang, bang. He hammers on the gates. “I’m letting him in.”

“If you open that gate with those things outside, even if it all goes well, you’ll be hanging in Times Square by sundown tomorrow. That’s best-case. You don’t even wanna to think about what happens to you, to me, to everybody else, if those wolves get in.”

Bang, bang, bang, bang.

The wolves move across the bridge, leaping on top of wrecks, sniffing the air, their ears pointed, their tails straight out behind them. You see this in the alleyways of the city. Cats hunting chubby rats, enjoying the chase.

Max’s one hand on my shoulder becomes two shaking me. “Salem, look at me. You’re smarter than this. One person isn’t worth the risk.”

“What if it were me down there?” I say, going for the cheap shot. “Would you watch me die?”

Max says nothing, but it’s a ‘No’ and there’s a pang of something in my stomach.

“I’m one of you!” the scream comes from below. “I live here! I’m from Manhattan!”

Max flinches.

“Please! Please!” the cries come. “The mayor is Warren Pemberton! He’s a goddamn fool! The Yankees are the worst goddamn baseball team I ever saw! The burgers in Soho are all made from cats and everybody fucking knows it! I have a kid! I live here! I’ve got a scar! Look at my scar! I’m from The Heights! Let me in!”

Outside these gates, for the first time there is light, there is movement, there is sound.

Max holds his grip on my shoulders, keeping me from looking down there again.

“If we let him in and he’s wounded, we kill him,” I say. I’m not backing down on this. “He won’t change until the next full moon. Look at him. Moon’s out. He’s not a wolf. If he’s hurt, he changes next month, not tonight.”

“If you open that gate and someone sees,” Max says, his eyes shining wet, “they’ll make me tie the noose around your neck myself.”

What now, Salem?

Bang, bang, bang.

What now, big girl?

Bang, bang, bang.

They’re going to kill him and they’re going to devour him, one of our own on our doorstep under your watch.

Dad would save him.

I grab Max’s wrist and twist with enough force to make him cry out and loosen his hold. I jab the butt of my rifle into his side and he drops to the floor with a groan. I don’t hit hard, but I know where to hit. I’m out the hatch and start my long climb down the ladder. There’s not long before the wolves catch up. Screaming prayers overpower the sounds of my labored breathing and the clatter of the rifle on my back against the steel tower supports.

I get down and he’s moved on from the prayers. “Private Greenaway,” he says. “First Company. I’m one of you. I’m a grunt just like you.” He shouts it up at the tower, unaware I’ve left it.

The gates are barred with a heavy iron crossbeam. On either side of the bar sits a nest of chains and locks. The old man at the gates glances at me from his radio station and sees me approach the crossbar and eye up the chains. He stands and leaves his rickety shelter of corrugated iron with its blankets, kettle, and wireless.

“I need the keys,” I say, approaching him. I adjust the rifle on my back. He draws his sidearm.

Or starts to.

I grab his arm and kick down into his ankle to crumple him to the ground.

You don't have to be strong to take down a man. You just have to know where to hit him. They don’t teach you this on Governors Island, of course. They teach you how to kill wolves – silver, beheading, fire – not men. Men, you have to learn the hard way, through beatings behind school, through fights play and real with your big brother. Fighting back makes it worse, but for every broken nose and black eye you learn a little more about men.

The old man cries out and curses as I snatch his pistol and rap him across his temple with the less dangerous end. The thump stings my fingers. I take the keys as he lies rolling with his head in his hands. In the movies, that would knock him out. Another one of those things you have to learn for yourself. Now, there's not much time. More guards will be on their way on horseback to shore up the gates, just in case.

The screams from behind the gates become more frantic. “My name is Private Greenaway!” he says. “Please!” The raw materials for the gate came from the half-sunken battleship in the Hudson. His voice, muffled through steel, must be the same sound those drowning Navy men made between gulps of water as their world dragged them down to the riverbed. I grab the first lock. The clatter of metal catches Private Greenaway’s attention. He hammers on the other side of the gate with renewed enthusiasm. His screaming becomes more frantic. “First Company! First Company! I’m one of you! Ask anyone!”

“Salem!” Max calls down. "No!" I glance up and Max's rifle is aimed down at me.

He’d never shoot me. Not even for this. We’ve had too many quiet talks in the middle of a watch. Nothing exciting, don’t get me wrong. But it’s all exciting with Max.

But he’d never shoot me.

Max knows everything there is to know about me. He knows about the time Stevie Keitel pinned me to the ground while his friends cut my hair with a knife.

He knows about the time I wet myself in class because I fell asleep during a projector show and saw my mother’s face. He knows that until I was thirteen I had to sleep with Judah in his bed and would scream if the candle went out. You can’t shoot someone when you know their worst fears.

But he thinks about it.

Max lowers his rifle and curses and starts for the hatch.

A sturdy slate of steel jammed against the gate, about the size of a mail slot, acts as a viewing hole. It doesn't get used much. Never much cause. Maybe there were a few stragglers in those early days, people who went into hiding for the Great Fall, but no one has knocked on our door in years. There are no humans left out there to do the knocking.

Never, ever go outside.

The viewing hatch opens with a clack onto the back of Greenaway’s head, his back square against the gate. He turns. The wolves are within spitting distance and I freeze. Seeing them on my level turns my blood cold. They’re bigger than you think, taller than Greenaway even on all fours. Some, including a white wolf that leads the way, are much bigger than the others, but they’re all huge.

Are the big ones the males?

How did these grow out of normal-sized people?

At a hundred yards, their teeth glint through the murky blue glow of their eyes. They look just like the one that dragged my mother screaming out of the house. Dad never let me see her after.

The white wolf jumps on top of an overturned car which buckles under its weight. Its four paws are enormous, its legs muscular, powerful.

“Open the gate!” Greenaway cries out. “Open it!”

My eyes are pinned to the massive white wolf which sinks low atop the car, its stance wide with its front paws splayed out, its eyes narrowed. It looks at me.

On my mother’s grave, it looks right at me.

I’ve never felt so weak, so stupid, so young and dumb, so… human.

“Don’t just stand there crying,” Greenaway says, his wide eyes frenzied. “Open this goddamn gate, will you?”

I look at the man on the other side of the gate, on the other side of the known world, and I say, flatly, “No.”

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