

KATE O'GORMAN

THE SHAPE OF MEMORY

Ada slipped out of bed fully dressed, careful not to disturb Henry asleep on his side. His form beneath the covers rose with each whistly inhale. She counted silently in her head, one-two-three-four..., feeling her way through the room they'd shared for eighteen years. At the dresser, she grabbed his wristwatch—the one she'd bought him for Christmas last year, which he left on a crystal butterdish alongside his wedding ring and whatever coins he still had in his pocket by day's end. She opened the drapes a titch, tilting the yellow dial toward the moonlight. 2:37 a.m. He'll be wondering where she is, him parked at the end of the street by the mailbox, like they'd planned. Henry snorted, the mattress squeaking as he turned. She waited for him to settle, for that throaty sigh she knew was coming, for his metered breath to resume before reaching for the red valise she'd packed earlier and hidden beneath the bedframe.

Henry stirred and instinctively knew, as one does after fifty-two years of marriage, that Ada was gone, the weight and pressure of the mattress different without her next to him. He sat up and edged his stiff legs over the side of the bed. These episodes were becoming more frequent, late-night wanderings a commonplace symptom of growing dementia, or so the doctor had said at their last appointment. Henry stood, slowly, and made his way toward