

gloves and hats and all of it, until the big bin in the closet is empty.

“Ma’am,” the first cop says. There’s a stiff little silence. He tries again, “It’s been relatively cold lately, so I don’t think a mother’s sending her daughter out to go ice skating without mittens or gloves. We believe this here is one of her mittens.”

Donna’s mother shakes her head, feeling a furious blur. “Nope,” she says. “Ask anyone. Red mittens go with red coats, and Donna’s coat was blue, not red. That’s in your notes, right?”

The second cop nods. He says, “The cashier told us—”

“But I’m telling you no,” Donna’s mother says. She’s calm, talking fast, each word punching. Again, those cookies on the table. Fresh? Or from yesterday? The day before? Who here likes these cookies?

The first cop says, “How can we get your daughter safely back home if you don’t cooperate with us?”

“I don’t know that mitten,” Donna’s mother says. “Never seen it. Maybe there’s another missing girl. A killer running loose.”

“We have no evidence to indicate that anyone’s dead,” he says.

Donna’s mother sighs. “Can I offer you a cookie?” she asks.

The two cops stand, their too-tall and too-broad bodies abruptly overflowing the room. “We’ll come back,” the first one says. They carefully step around the piles of mittens and hats as they maneuver to the door.

“I’ll find her myself,” Donna’s mother says. “You’ll see.”

“We all want her back safe and sound,” the first cop says. Or the second. Or maybe Donna’s mother speaks into an empty room. The statement’s positive and confident, like an advertising slogan that Donna’s mother wants to believe.



*This is how to clean: over and over, again and again, more and more and more. Cleanliness is next to godliness. A clean house is a happy house. Better believe you could eat off these floors.*