

Anna Solomon

an excerpt of

The Lobster Mafia Story

The lobster mafia spun Tom Lanza's death as an accident, the sort that happens all the time, no one responsible but the man himself or a dead motor or a wind changing direction without any warning. The men bribed the paper. They had cops for brothers. They did what they always do when one of the gangs cuts traps or puts water in a gas line or messes up the gears on a boat caught working their territory: they drowned the truth. This was easy because Tom Lanza was so scorned in the harbor and beyond it nearly unknown, but even easier because he died two days before the blizzard pummeled the coast from the sound all the way up to New Hampshire. It's easy to blame a man for his own death when he doesn't have enough humility to obey the weather. Five full days passed before the Coast Guard could go searching, and by the time they found Lanza's boat adrift out at Stellwagen Bank, the world was shut up under five feet of snow, quiet as a pillow.

The first time I lied was when an officer came to the door, wanting to know did I know anything about the death of a man called Tom Lanza. I didn't. Not yet. But I knew from the look on his face, a kind of long-held flinch, that even if I did, he didn't want me to tell him. Behind him, the snow glittered insanely; my back ached from days of shoveling. It was I who'd kept the back door clear, and dug out the path to the woodpile, and dug and dug, and carried logs and water and tended the stove and made our food last. The day the storm hit, my husband had fallen ill with a high fever; the morning the officer came, he was still upstairs, hot and dumb under the blankets. What that had to do with Thomas Lanza, I had no idea, but I could see from the way the man looked at me that there was likely some relation.

“Well?” he asked. He was cold, his right boot absent-mindedly kicking the step—a piece of granite cut out of the quarry four hundred years ago. He kept kicking like it might budge. He looked bewildered by my hesitation.

“No,” I said. “I don’t know anything.”

He nodded. “You know where Bobby was in the a.m. on February six?”

I counted back, quickly, in my mind. Then I said, “Home. Like any man with half a wit about him.”