THE HUNGRY GODS

go to the polls

N. Van Seters & Claude

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APPOINTMENT OF SCRUTINEER

TOWNSHIP OF PIPPIN BAY — 2026 GENERAL LOCAL ELECTION AND ASSENT VOTING

Appointment of Scrutineer (Assent Voting)

Question: Loan Authorization Bylaw No. 2026-14 (Dolly Wiebe Memorial Curling Centre — Ice Plant and Roof Replacement)

Voting Place: Dolly Wiebe Memorial Curling Centre, 410 Lakeshore Drive (Upper Lounge)

Name of Scrutineer: Lorna Petrasek

Appointed as scrutineer: ☒ IN FAVOUR OF THE QUESTION ☐ OPPOSED TO THE QUESTION

The scrutineer must carry this appointment at all times while at the voting place and produce it on the request of an election official.

I had it in a plastic sleeve, the kind you put a recipe in. Trish had told me to bring it in a sleeve because they would ask to see it and I would want it to look like I had done this before.

I got there at two minutes past seven. The doors were locked, and the Allfather was already at them.

He was not a voter. He was the presiding election official. He had a lanyard, and on the card it said PRESIDING ELECTION OFFICIAL in capitals, and a canvas bag with the Township crest that clinked. When I said good morning he looked at the plastic sleeve, and then at me, and said, “Scrutineer For,” which was correct, and unlocked the door with a key from his own ring.

The Dolly Wiebe Memorial Curling Centre is a long tin building with a lounge on top and six sheets underneath. It was built in 1961 and extended in 1974. The extension is why the lounge windows look onto the ice instead of the lake, which is two hundred metres away and has not been visible from inside the building since before I was married. Downstairs it smells of cold and rubber. Upstairs it smells of decades of Saturday chili and the wax they put on the bar. I have played second on the Tuesday ladies’ league for nineteen seasons. I could find the lounge in the dark, and that morning I nearly had to, because the Allfather went up first and I followed him in the dark until he found the switch.

The rest of them arrived a minute later. There were eight election officials for our voting place, plus him, and they came up the stairs in the order of people who had been told seven and meant it. Elaine, who ran the Bayside Pharmacy till for thirty years. Doug, who used to be the school custodian at Pippin Bay Elementary and still walked like he was checking a hallway. Rhoda and Bernice, who are sisters and who I believe have worked every election in this township since the Expo year, although they will not say. Merv, who I did not know. The Seeker, with a blue binder, who went straight to the registration

end of the room. The Conscience-Keeper, in a cardigan, who set up at a small table by himself with a laminated card and a pen on a chain; he was there to take people's solemn declarations. And last the Chaos-Weaver, who came up behind all of them and stopped at the top of the stairs, and whom I did not think about again for most of the morning.

The bar had its shutter down. Somebody from the club had taped a piece of paper to it that said BAR CLOSED — ELECTION, as if anybody in Pippin Bay would mistake a voting place for a social.

At five past seven the Allfather stood in the middle of the room and the officials made their declarations. They did it one at a time at the small table, in front of the Conscience-Keeper, who held up the laminated card so they could read it, and listened to each one all the way through as if it might be different. Faithfully and impartially. Not accept any inducement. Preserve the secrecy of the ballot. Not be a candidate, or a candidate's representative, or a candidate's financial agent. Bernice did hers from memory and he let her finish and then had her do it again off the card. She did not seem to mind. I gathered it had happened before.

Then it was my turn. Scrutineers make a declaration too, at the same little table: that we will preserve the secrecy of the ballot and not interfere with anybody marking one. I had looked that up. I had looked up a great many things since August, when I put in my application to be a scrutineer for the question at this voting place and found out, two weeks later,

that I was the only person who had applied for the For side here. Trish called this a gap in our ground game. I called it Tuesday.

At twelve past seven Arnold Fehr came up the stairs with a thermos under one arm and a folded newspaper under the other, and said good morning to the Allfather, and to Rhoda and Bernice by name, and to me. He made his declaration from memory. The Conscience-Keeper had him do it again off the card.

"Lorna."

"Arnold."

He had his appointment in his shirt pocket, folded in quarters. It said OPPOSED TO THE QUESTION. He didn't take it out. He wasn't required to.

I had known Arnold to nod to for twenty-five years. He had worked at the Township office, in finance, for most of that, and then he had retired, and then he had written four letters to the Pippin Bay Packet about the curling centre borrowing bylaw, all of which I had read twice, the second time looking for something to be angry at. There was not much. That made me angrier.

The Allfather came over to us.

"Scrutineers," he said. "You'll observe from here."

Here was two chairs beside the trophy case, under the photograph of Dolly Wiebe.

The photograph is from 1967. Dolly is in a white cardigan with a crest on it and she is holding a broom across her body and looking at the camera as if it has just thrown a weak draw. She skipped four Interior ladies' championships out of this building and died in 1987, and the next year they renamed it for her,

which according to the club minutes was decided by a vote of the membership at which nobody voted against and two people abstained because they were related to her. Every curler in Pippin Bay has been looked at by that photograph while waiting for a drink. Now Arnold and I were going to sit under it for the day.

"From here we can't see the ballot box," I said.

"You can see the ballot box," he said. "You can't see into the compartments."

That was correct too. I had read section 103, which says that the presiding election official may designate the locations from which representatives observe. I had hoped it said something else.

"And the candidate scrutineers?"

"Beside you."

There were two more chairs. Merv was unfolding them.

* * *

The candidate scrutineers came at twenty past.

Kaden was ours. He was twenty-two and had worked on Tamsin Hiebert's campaign since July, mostly on his phone, and he was scrutineering for all six Common Ground council candidates and for Tamsin for mayor, which he could do because each of them had signed his appointment, which he showed me, which was not in a sleeve. He made his declaration, shook my hand, sat down and began to type.

Darcy Lund was theirs. Darcy sells houses. His face is on the bench outside the Bayside Pharmacy and on the back of the Little League scoreboard, and he came up the stairs in a fleece

vest with his name embroidered on it, which I thought was a bold choice for a man who was not allowed to campaign within a hundred metres of the building. He was the scrutineer for Lyle Pellerin for mayor and for all six Common Sense council candidates. He said, "Morning, all," and then, to the Allfather, "Where do you want me, chief?"

"Beside Mr. Fehr. After your declaration."

Darcy made his declaration with one hand on the embroidered part of his vest, as if it might be a Bible.

"Arnold." Darcy sat. "Didn't know you were doing this."

"I'm against the question," Arnold said. "Not the slate."

"Same difference."

"No," Arnold said, and opened his newspaper.

The Common Sense Coalition and the Common Ground Coalition are both elector organizations, which means their names are printed beside their candidates on the ballot. There are two of them because in 2022 there was one, and then there was a disagreement about a crosswalk. I am not going to go into the crosswalk. People on both sides have stopped curling over it.

The names are a problem. They were a problem from the beginning, and everyone knew it, and neither side would change, because each side felt the other side had taken the name from it. On the ballot they appear as COMMON SENSE and COMMON GROUND, in the same font, in the same size, one under the other wherever the alphabet put them. Through September both sides received each other's donations. In the first week of October somebody's grandmother put up a lawn sign for each and told the Packet she was "covering it."

Common Ground is for the rink. Common Sense is for "responsible borrowing," which on the rink means against. That is not why I am Common Ground. I am Common Ground because of the rink.

On Tuesday nights from October to March I see the same seven women I have seen every Tuesday since 2007. Three of them I would not cross the street to talk to. I would drive through a snowstorm to curl with all of them, and I have, twice, once in the ditch. My husband says that is what a community is. My husband has never curled. He goes to the Legion on Tuesdays and says the same thing about the Legion.

* * *

At half past seven Darcy said, "Chief, there's an issue."

The Allfather was at the ballot box with Merv. He did not turn.

"Out front," Darcy said. "On the building. The Save Our Sheets banner."

The Save Our Sheets banner is eight feet long, vinyl, red on white. The club had it made in June, when council decided to put the borrowing bylaw to a vote on election day instead of running it through an alternative approval process, which council can do and which Arnold's second letter to the Packet had said it should do. The banner said SAVE OUR SHEETS — VOTE YES OCTOBER 17 and had a picture of a curling stone with a heart on it. It was zip-tied to the railing above the main doors.

"That's campaign material," Darcy said. "On the voting place."

"It's the club's banner," I said. "It's the club's building."

"It's the voting place."

He was right. I knew he was right while I was saying it. The rule is that you cannot campaign, or show support for a result, within a hundred metres of a voting place while voting is going on, and the banner was zero metres from the voting place, and it said VOTE YES on it.

The Allfather looked at his watch. It was 7:31.

"It'll be covered by eight," he said.

"With what?" said Darcy. "It's eight feet."

That was the question. The election kit had tape and string and a roll of the green plastic sheeting they use to cover the bar mirror, and the plastic sheeting was four feet wide. Doug went down and held it up against the banner and came back and said it would show SAVE OUR and the top half of the stone. Elaine said you could double it. Rhoda said doubled it would show the heart. Darcy said a heart was campaign material, and Kaden said a heart was not a position on a borrowing bylaw, and Darcy said in context it was. Kaden typed this.

The Allfather did not join in. At 7:36 he sent Doug downstairs to ask the icemaker whether there was anything ten feet long in the building.

At 7:44 the Hand came up the stairs, behind Doug, with a roll of canvas on his shoulder, laid it on the floor and unrolled the first three feet, and stood back.

DOLLY WIEBE MEMORIAL BONSPIEL — 1988.

It was blue canvas, white letters, hand-painted, with a brass grommet every eighteen inches, and it had been, I found out

later, in a box behind the furnace for thirty-eight years. Two different people told me later that they had looked for it, for the fiftieth anniversary of the building in 2011, and not found it. Neither of them had asked him.

The Hand did not say where he had found it. He went back downstairs. He had the first draw to get ready.

The Allfather looked at the banner for a moment. He had Doug measure it. It was ten feet. He sent Doug and Merv down with it, and the zip ties, and a pair of side cutters from the canvas bag, and at 7:51 the Dolly Wiebe Memorial Curling Centre had, hanging over its front doors, a banner for a bonspiel that took place in 1988, and behind it a banner that said VOTE YES that nobody could read.

"Is that campaign material?" Kaden asked Darcy. He had his thumbs ready.

Darcy thought about it.

"No," he said finally. "Unless she's running."

Dolly Wiebe looked down at the four of us from 1967.

At 7:58 the Allfather stood at the head of the room with the ballot box.

Then he looked at me. I had stood up without meaning to.

"Scrutineer," he said. "Sit where you can see."

I sat. I could see. I wrote 7:58 in my notebook, and then underneath it, because I did not know what else to write, *banner*.

OPENING

BALLOT BOX — RECORD OF INSPECTION AND SEALING

Voting Place: Dolly Wiebe Memorial Curling Centre (Upper Lounge)

Ballot Box No.: 07

Inspected empty and sealed by Presiding Election Official at 7:59 a.m.

In the presence of: R. Toews (Election Official)

Seal Nos.: 0047113, 0047114

Additional seals applied by candidate representatives: ☒ Yes ☐ No (specify): *1 (D. Lund)*

The ballot box is grey plastic, the size of a picnic cooler, with a slot in the lid and a flap over the slot.

The Allfather turned the box upside down. He held it there for Rhoda to look into, and then, without being asked, he turned it toward us. I looked into it. It was a grey plastic box with nothing in it.

“Empty,” Arnold said, to nobody.

The seals were thin plastic strips with numbers on them, and they went through the lid hinges and clicked. Then Darcy got

up and asked to put on one of his own, which he is allowed to do, and produced a roll of tamper-evident tape from his fleece vest that said LUND REALTY — YOUR NEIGHBOUR IN REAL ESTATE in small print along one edge.

The Allfather looked at it.

"That's advertising," Kaden said.

"It's tape," Darcy said.

"It's got your company name on it."

"It's not election advertising. It's real estate advertising."

The Allfather tore off a length, folded the printed edge under so that the words were against the lid, and pressed it down. Darcy initialled it. The Allfather wrote *1 (D. Lund)* on the form. And then it was eight o'clock, and the doors opened.

* * *

The All-Seeing came in at four minutes past.

He was not from our voting place. He was from the chief election officer's office, and his job was to drive between the township's three voting places all day, here and the Legion and the school gym, in a white Township Ford with a magnetic sign on the door, and check on things, and phone in numbers. He had a clipboard and a phone and a lanyard that said ELECTION SUPERVISOR, and he stood with the Allfather by the bar shutter and said, not loudly:

"Four hundred by half past ten. Then it falls away. Sixty an hour, about, till four. Then the supper push. You'll have the worst of it between six-thirty and the close."

The Allfather nodded.

"The bonspiel," said the All-Seeing, "will add forty in the morning and sixty after the second draw. They come up in teams."

"In fours," said the Allfather.

"In fours. Then the mail ballots tie up your list for the first hour, because people who voted by mail come in to make sure."

Kaden had heard this. He was typing it. I could see the screen. He had written *their guy says 400 by 1030* and sent it, to Trish, I assumed, and then a second message, *is that good for us*.

Trish wrote back *who is their guy*.

He was nobody's guy. He worked for the Township. I told Kaden this and he said, "Right, yeah," and kept typing.

* * *

The first voter had been waiting since a quarter past seven.

He was about seventy, in a quilted jacket, and he had been standing at the bottom of the stairs with a plastic grocery bag folded in one hand, and when Doug opened the door he came up and gave his name to Elaine, who found him on the list and drew a ruler under it. He took his ballot and the folder for it and went to one of the compartments, which are cardboard screens on a table, set along the window over the ice.

I had not thought about that until I saw it. Every compartment faced the window. Every person who voted in the Dolly Wiebe Memorial Curling Centre that day stood alone with a pencil and the mayoralty and six council seats and the question, looking down at six sheets of ice, which on that particular

Saturday had twelve teams on them, because the Harvest Spiel had been booked the previous November, before anybody knew the lounge was going to be a voting place.

The first voter marked his ballot, folded it into the folder, and walked it to the ballot box, where Merv held the flap while he tipped it in. Then he walked to the bar shutter, where the All-Seeing was writing something on his clipboard.

"What time's the depot open till?" he asked.

The All-Seeing looked up.

"The recycling depot," the first voter said. "Behind the works yard. They changed the hours."

"Four, Saturdays," the All-Seeing said. "You'll want to go after two. They do half their week between ten and noon."

"Half?"

"Near enough."

The first voter considered this, and nodded, and went down the stairs with his folded grocery bag, and I watched him from the lounge window cross the parking lot and get into a truck and drive away in the direction of the depot, at eight minutes past eight in the morning.

"He'll go now," Arnold said. He did not look up from his crossword. "They always go now."

* * *

At twenty past eight a woman came up the stairs who had already voted.

She had voted by mail. She had applied for a mail ballot in September, because she had thought she would be in Victoria

for her granddaughter's christening, and then the christening had moved, and she had voted by mail anyway, on the second of October, and posted it from the Bayside Pharmacy counter. And she wanted to know that it had got here.

Elaine found her on the list. Beside her name, in the column where the ruler would have gone, there was a small pencilled M and a date.

"It came," said Elaine. "The fifth."

"How do I know it's been counted?"

"It'll be counted tonight. With the others."

"Can I see it?"

"No, dear," said Elaine. "Nobody can see it. That's the point of it."

The woman looked at the M for a while, as if it might change. Then she thanked Elaine and went down the stairs.

Between twenty past eight and ten past nine, six more people came up the stairs to look at their M. Elaine got faster at it. By the third one she had her finger on the M before they'd finished their sentence. By the last one she was saying "It came, dear, the seventh," before he had reached the table, because she had seen him come up the stairs and she knew his name and she had already looked.

The last one was a man called Dolan, who had mailed his on the first.

"Can I vote again," he said, "to be sure?"

"No, Mr. Dolan," said Elaine. "That's the one thing."

He went away satisfied. I don't know what with.

At ten past nine there were no more of them. The All-Seeing had said the first hour. It had been the first hour and ten minutes, but Mr. Dolan had stopped for a coffee on the way, so I suppose that counted.

* * *

From eight until ten the lounge filled and emptied and filled. It came up the stairs in families and in pairs and in fours. Elaine and Bernice had the voters list split alphabetically, A to K and L to Z, and the line formed at the top of the stairs and split itself, more or less, at a strip of masking tape that Doug had put on the floor.

The voters coming up the stairs passed the doors to the ice on the way. The doors were held open with rubber wedges because the bonspiel was on. So every voter who came to vote in Pippin Bay that morning walked past forty-eight curlers and the sound of rocks, and about a third of them stopped on the stairs to watch an end, and the line backed up into the lobby, and the Conscience-Keeper went down at twenty to nine and asked the club to close the doors. The club said they couldn't because the ice needed the air moving. I had not known that. Neither, I think, did the club. The Hand had told them at some point that morning, and they were repeating it.

Through all of it the curlers came up in fours, as the All-Seeing had said they would, between games, in their sliders and grippers and their sweaters, and voted, and went back down. Every team, at the top of the stairs, said "Go Dolly" to the photograph over our chairs. They say it before the first end

of every game in that building, and have since 1988, and they were not going to stop for an election. The Chaos-Weaver let them. Dolly was not on the ballot. They were not wearing Save Our Sheets toques yet. That came later.

One of the Kamloops curlers touched the frame on the way past and knocked it crooked, and Arnold got up and straightened it, and sat down, and did not mention it.

At ten the All-Seeing left for the other voting places. At twenty-five past ten he phoned. I know he phoned because the Allfather said, "Three ninety-one," into the phone at the bar shutter, and then, "Yes," and hung up.

At twenty-five to eleven there were four hundred and two names ruled off on the list.

At a quarter to eleven there were no names being ruled off at all, because there was no one on the stairs. The only sound in the lounge was the rocks.

Arnold filled in a word.

"Sixty an hour," he said, "till four."

REGISTRATION

APPLICATION FOR REGISTRATION AS NON-RESIDENT PROPERTY ELECTOR

— WRITTEN CONSENT OF REGISTERED OWNERS —

Where there is more than one registered owner of the property, only one of those individuals may be registered as a non-resident property elector, and that individual must have the written consent of a majority of the other registered owners.

Property: 2280 Kettle View Road (Lot 4, Plan KAP1471)

Registered owners: _____ _____ _____

Owner designated to register: _____

Nobody in Pippin Bay is from Pippin Bay. I mean that a third of it is on the list as non-resident property electors, because they own a cabin on the bench or a condo by the beach and live in Vancouver, or Surrey, or Kamloops, and are allowed to vote here as long as they have lived in British Columbia for six months and owned the property for thirty days and bring a piece of paper that proves it. The Albertans own another third and are not allowed to vote at all, which they mention, at the Bayside Pharmacy, every four years.

The Seeker handled all of them.

He had the registration table, which was a folding table at the top of the stairs on the right-hand side, with a laptop on it that he did not use much, and the binder, which was three inches thick and blue, and a pen, and a rubber stamp. Anybody who wasn't on the voters list came to him. If they didn't have the right two pieces of identification he would explain, without hurrying, what they could do instead. There was always something they could do instead, and I watched him for an hour without seeing him turn anyone away.

I also didn't see him guess. When a man said he lived "up past the old Kessler packing house," he did not nod. He opened the binder, and found the packing house, which had been demolished in 1996, and then the road the man meant.

* * *

The Ferreiras came up the stairs at twenty past ten. There were three of them.

They were siblings in their sixties, two brothers and a sister, from North Vancouver, Abbotsford and Kamloops respectively, and they jointly owned a cabin on Kettle View Road that their father had built in 1971. They had driven up separately. They had not discussed it. They each wanted to vote.

"Only one of you can," the Seeker said.

They knew that. They had known it, it turned out, since the last election, when the same thing had happened. In 2022 the brother from North Vancouver had voted. In 2018 it had been the sister. That was the problem. The brother from

Abbotsford felt it was his turn. The sister felt that 2022 didn't count because the brother from North Vancouver had registered without the written consent of a majority of the other owners, which is required. The brother from North Vancouver said she had consented in an email. The sister said an email was not written consent. The brother from Abbotsford said that if an email was written consent then he had consented to nothing, because he had not been copied.

There is no rule for this. I have looked. The rule says one of you, with the written consent of a majority of the others. With three owners a majority of the others is both of them. They needed two signatures on a form that, at that moment, two of them were refusing to sign for the third, in any combination. A line was forming behind them.

The Seeker listened to all of it. Then he turned the binder around.

"Who pays the property tax?"

They looked at him.

"Kettle View Road," he said. "Lot 4. The tax notice goes to one address. Who opens it?"

There was a pause.

"I do," said the sister.

"Every year?"

"Every year since Dad."

"Do they pay you back?"

"Eventually," said the sister.

The brothers looked at each other. The man from Abbotsford took the pen. The man from North Vancouver took it after him.

The sister registered as the non-resident property elector for 2280 Kettle View Road, with the written consent of both other registered owners, and voted, and the three of them went down the stairs together, arguing about whether the tax thing meant she had to do it every time.

The Seeker turned the binder back. He had not taken his hand off it.

* * *

"That's not in the Act," I said to Arnold. "The tax."

"No."

"He just made that up."

"He didn't make anything up," Arnold said. "He asked a question. They answered it."

"Is he allowed?"

Arnold looked at me over his glasses. "Who's going to object?"

Kaden was typing. He had written *3 cabin ppl only 1 can vote, LOL* and sent it. Darcy was smiling at the stairs. He had sold the Ferreiras' father the lot next door to the cabin in 2004, I found out later, and he would have liked to have been asked.

* * *

At ten past eleven a woman in her forties came to the registration table with a driver's licence and a curling league invoice.

The driver's licence had her old address on it. She had moved in August. She had nothing else with her new ad-

dress, she said, because everything came by email now, and she'd thought the invoice would do because it was the club's own building.

The Seeker took the invoice and read it. He read it all the way through. It was from the Dolly Wiebe Memorial Curling Centre Society and it was for the Thursday mixed league, 2026–27 season, one curler, $395.00, and it had her name and her new address on it and the society's registration number at the bottom.

"This is fine as a second document," he said. "It shows your name and your residence."

The woman looked relieved.

"It also shows," said the Seeker, "that it was due on the first."

The woman stopped looking relieved.

"You can pay downstairs," said the Seeker. "They have the machine at the bar." Then he paused. "Not today. Monday."

She registered. She voted. She went down the stairs and I watched her through the lounge window walk directly to the club office door, which was locked, because everybody in the club was either curling or voting. She stood at it for a while.

I turned to Arnold. He was writing in a word.

"You knew she hadn't paid?" I said.

"I don't know her," Arnold said. "I knew the league fees were due on the first."

"How?"

"It's on the invoice."

* * *

At a quarter to twelve a young woman came up the stairs with a driver's licence and a bank card and a student card from the university in Kelowna.

She was not on the list. She had turned eighteen since the last election and had never voted in anything. She said this to the Seeker as if confessing it. The address on her licence was her parents' house on Apple Court. The bank statement on her phone went to the same address. The student card had a residence hall on it.

"I don't know if I live here," she said. "I live in Kelowna. Except I don't. I live here. I'm only there for school."

The Seeker did not open the binder. This was not a binder question.

"Where do you go back to?" he said. "When the term's over."

"Here."

"Where's your doctor?"

"Here. Dr. Mah."

"Where are your winter boots?"

She looked at him. "Here," she said. "In the garage. I keep forgetting them."

"Then you live here," said the Seeker. "Going away to school doesn't change where you live." He turned the registration form round for her to sign. He showed her where.

She registered. She voted. She was in the compartment for a long time, with the pencil, looking down at the ice, and

when she came out and walked her folder to the ballot box and tipped it in, Rhoda said, from the list, “First time?”

“Yes.”

And Rhoda clapped. Three claps, small ones. Bernice clapped with her. Then Elaine. Then, after a second, Merv, at the ballot box. The young woman went red. The Allfather did not clap, but he did not stop it, and I understood from the way the sisters did it, without looking at each other, that it was something they had always done.

I clapped. Arnold put down his pen and clapped. Darcy clapped. Kaden clapped and then, because he is twenty-two, said, “Hey, if you ever want to volunteer—”

“Not in here,” said the Chaos-Weaver, from the top of the stairs, without turning round.

“Right,” said Kaden. “Sorry.”

The young woman went down the stairs, past the Chaos-Weaver, who moved half a step.

* * *

I looked at the registration table. The Seeker was helping a couple from Surrey find their lot in the binder. They had brought a land title search, a property tax notice, two driver’s licences, two passports, and their marriage certificate. He looked at all of it. He used one of them.

RECORD OF CHALLENGE

RECORD OF CHALLENGE OF ELECTOR

(Local Government Act, s. 126)

Name of person challenged: Irene Hiebert

Time of challenge: 10:52 a.m.

Challenged by: ☐ Election official ☒ Candidate representative ☐ Elector

Name of challenger: Darcy Lund

Grounds: ☒ Not entitled to vote ☐ Contravened s. 161(3)

Particulars: *Resides in Kelowna.*

Outcome: ☐ Satisfactory evidence provided ☒ Solemn declaration made ☐ Refused — not entitled to vote

Irene Hiebert is eighty-one and she is Tamsin Hiebert's mother, and since July she had been living with her sister in Kelowna, because of her hip.

Everyone knew this. It had been in the Packet. Tamsin had mentioned it in her speech at the all-candidates forum at the Legion, when she was asked why she was running and said that her mother had taught her that you show up, and that her

mother could not be here tonight because of her hip, and that her mother would be home in October to vote. People clapped. Lyle Pellerin clapped. Darcy clapped. I was in the second row and I remember Darcy clapping.

She came up the stairs at ten to eleven, during the lull, one step at a time, on a cane with four feet. Tamsin did not come with her. A candidate is not allowed in a voting place while voting is going on, except to vote, and Tamsin had already voted, at the advance poll, with a photographer from the Packet. So Tamsin was sitting in her Subaru in the far corner of the parking lot, more than a hundred metres from the doors, watching her mother climb the stairs of the Dolly Wiebe Memorial Curling Centre through the windshield.

Irene got to the top. She gave her name to Elaine. Elaine found her and was reaching for the ruler.

Darcy stood up.

"I challenge this elector," he said.

The room went quiet in the way a curling rink goes quiet when somebody falls.

He did it properly, and I'll give him that. He did it in person, which is the only way it can be done, and he did it before she had been given her ballot, which is the only time it can be done, and when the Allfather looked at him he said, "Not entitled to vote. She lives in Kelowna," in a clear voice, with his appointment in his hand.

The Allfather got the form from the canvas bag. He filled in the top of it. Then he turned to Irene.

"Mrs. Hiebert," he said. "You've been challenged. You can still vote. You can show me something that satisfies me you're entitled, or you can make a solemn declaration that you are. If you do neither, I can't give you a ballot."

"What does he want?" said Irene.

"He thinks you live in Kelowna."

"I'm staying in Kelowna," said Irene. "I live here."

"Then you can say so," said the Allfather, "to him." He indicated the Conscience-Keeper, who stood up, and moved his laminated card to the front of his little table, and turned his chair to face the room.

* * *

The Conscience-Keeper read her the declaration a line at a time. She said it back to him a line at a time.

She took her time.

"I," said the Conscience-Keeper, "state your full name."

"I," said Irene Hiebert, "Irene Margaret Hiebert, née Dyck."

There was no need for the née. She put it in. The Conscience-Keeper did not object. He wrote it on the form.

"Solemnly declare that I am a resident of the Township of Pippin Bay."

Irene looked at Darcy.

"Solemnly," she said, "declare." She took a breath. "That I am a resident. Of the Township. Of Pippin Bay. Where I have lived since nineteen hundred and sixty-two. At 506 Orchard Road. Which you people have renamed twice. In the house

my husband built. Which you sold my neighbours, Darcy, for too much."

The Conscience-Keeper waited until she had finished.

"Just the declaration, Mrs. Hiebert."

"That is the declaration," said Irene.

He wrote something.

"That I am entitled to be registered as an elector."

"That I am entitled," said Irene, "to be registered. As an elector."

"And that I have not previously voted in this election."

"I have not," said Irene, "previously voted. In this election. Unlike some." She said it to Darcy. Darcy had voted at the advance poll too. So had Tamsin. So, I happened to know, had half the Common Sense Coalition, who had gone together in a minibus. I don't know what she meant by it. I don't think it mattered.

"And I understand that it is an offence to make a false or misleading declaration," said the Conscience-Keeper.

"I understand that," said Irene. "Do you understand that, Darcy?"

"Mrs. Hiebert," said the Conscience-Keeper.

"I'm finished."

He had her sign. He signed. He handed the form to the Allfather, who wrote the time and *Solemn declaration made* and signed at the bottom, and then handed Elaine a slip, and Elaine drew the ruler under Irene's name and gave her a ballot.

It had taken six minutes. Three people had come up the stairs while it happened and stood at the tape and waited, and not one of them had said anything.

Irene went to the compartment nearest the window. She stood there a long time. When she came out she walked her folder to the ballot box, past the four of us under Dolly Wiebe, and Merv held the flap, and she tipped it in.

Then she came over to Darcy's chair.

"You were very good at that," she said.

"Mrs. Hiebert—"

"I mean it. Your father would have been too frightened." And she went down the stairs, one at a time, to her daughter.

I went to the end window and watched her cross the parking lot.

It took her a long time. The lot is big, because the rink fills it on bonspiel weekends, and the far corner where Tamsin had parked was all the way past the bottle bins. Irene went across it on her four-footed cane, between the rows, in the wind off the lake.

Tamsin had got out of the Subaru. She was standing beside it, watching her mother come. Then she started walking toward her. Then she stopped.

I didn't understand at first. Then I did. Somewhere in the middle of that parking lot was a line a hundred metres from the front doors of the Dolly Wiebe Memorial Curling Centre, and Tamsin Hiebert was a candidate, and she did not know exactly where the line was. Nobody had painted it. So she had stopped where she thought it might be, on a yellow parking stripe, and

she stood on the stripe with her arms out a little, like a woman waiting at the shallow end, while her mother came the rest of the way to her.

Irene got to her. Tamsin put her arms round her. Then they walked back to the Subaru together, slowly, and Tamsin opened the door, and Irene got in, and Tamsin went round and got in, and they sat there. They didn't drive off for a long time.

Arnold had come to the window behind me. He looked out at the Subaru.

"She'd have been all right at the bottle bins," he said. "That's a hundred and twenty."

"How do you know?"

"I paced it. In 2014. We had a referendum on the sewer."

There is no line for a candidate's feet, as it happens; the hundred metres is about signs and canvassing. But Tamsin was wearing her campaign jacket, the green one with COMMON GROUND across the back, so in fairness she and Arnold might both have been right.

* * *

I texted Kaden, who was sitting beside me: *WE WON THAT*.

Kaden read it on his phone and looked at me and said, "I'm right here."

"I know," I said. "I didn't want to say it out loud."

"What did we win?"

I didn't have an answer. Irene had voted. She was always going to vote. What Darcy had done was put it on the form, *Particulars: Resides in Kelowna*, so that somebody, later, in some

coffee shop, could say Tamsin's mother had been challenged. It would be true.

"It's in the record," Arnold said. "Both of them are. Née Dyck."

The Conscience-Keeper had gone back to his table. He was squaring the edges of the declaration forms in the pile. He squared them twice.

* * *

Darcy didn't challenge anybody else before noon. He sat with his arms crossed. At twenty past eleven he got a phone call that he took on the landing, and I heard him say, "Well, it's done now," and, "She did," and, "No, she did it in about six minutes," and, "Lyle, I'm not going back up there and apologizing to her, she's gone."

When he came back in, Arnold said, without looking up from the paper, "Eight letters. 'Formal statement under oath.'"

Darcy looked at him.

"Starts with A," said Arnold.

"Affidavit," said Darcy, and sat down.

Arnold wrote it in. It ran off the end of the row and into the margin, where he looked at it for a while.

"Averment," he said, and rubbed it out.

ONE HUNDRED METRES

NOTICE

RESTRICTIONS ON ELECTION ACTIVITIES — GENERAL VOTING DAY

During voting hours, no person may engage in activities that show support for or opposition to a candidate, elector organization, or assent voting question within **100 metres** of this voting place. This includes canvassing, displaying signs, posters or banners, and wearing buttons, hats or clothing bearing campaign material.

Election officials may cover or remove material in contravention of this notice.

The club started selling the toques in September. They were red with a white pompom, knitted, with SAVE OUR SHEETS across the cuff in white, and they cost twenty-five dollars at the bar, and the money went to the ice plant fund, which the club had been raising since 2019 by means of meat draws, bottle drives and a calendar that we do not discuss. The toques had raised seven and a half thousand of it. Everybody in the Harvest Spiel had one. Some of the club had two.

They did not wear them upstairs in the morning. The ice is cold but the lounge is warm, and you take your toque off when you come up the stairs. That was the custom of the building, and nobody thought about it.

At twelve, near the end of the second draw, Darcy made his complaint.

He made it to the Allfather, at the ballot box, in a voice the stairs could hear. He said that the Harvest Spiel had ninety-six curlers in it, and that every one of them owned a toque that said SAVE OUR SHEETS, and that the second draw would be coming up to vote at half past twelve, and that the forecast for the afternoon was four degrees with wind off the lake. He said he was just raising it.

"They're not wearing them," said Kaden.

"They will be at half past twelve," said Darcy. "When they come in from the parking lot."

Kaden typed, *he wants them to take their hats off,* and sent it. A moment later Trish wrote back, *GOOD. make him say it again louder.*

The Allfather was looking at the stairhead.

The Chaos-Weaver was there. He was the door official. He had been there since eight. He had come up the stairs last, behind the other officials, at seven, and at eight he had taken the top step and the masking tape, and since then he had done nothing that I had noticed. That was what he did. He stood at the top of the stairs and the line went past him in the right direction. When two people tried to go up the stairs at the same time as one was coming down, he moved half a step and

the person coming down came down. When a man went to stand in the A to K line with his driver's licence already out in his hand, and it said WIEBE on it, which is W, the Chaos-Weaver said "L to Z" in a mild voice before the man had got as far as Elaine, and the man said, "Oh, yes," and moved. I watched him do it all morning without understanding that he was doing anything.

The Allfather said to him, "Toques."

"Yes," said the Chaos-Weaver.

* * *

At half past twelve the second draw of the Harvest Spiel ended and the curlers came up the stairs in fours. They had come in from the parking lot, where they had gone to get things from their cars, and they were wearing their toques.

The Chaos-Weaver was standing at the top step with a cardboard box. It had once held a case of the folders they put the ballots in. He had written on the side of it, in black marker, HATS. He had not written anything else.

"Hat in the box, or in your pocket," he said to the first curler, a woman from the Kamloops rink. "It's got the question on it."

She looked at her toque, which she had bought that morning, and which said SAVE OUR SHEETS.

"It's a toque," she said.

"It is," said the Chaos-Weaver.

She put it in her pocket. So did the next one. The third one put his in the box. By the time the second team of

the four came up, the curlers at the bottom of the stairs had seen the box, and word had gone down the line, and by the time they reached the top step their toques were already in their pockets, and the Chaos-Weaver was saying "Thank you" and moving the box half a step out of the way.

It took two minutes. The line did not slow down. The line, in fact, went faster than it had all morning, because the curlers were all doing the same thing for the same reason, and I have played this game for nineteen seasons and never seen forty-eight curlers agree on anything.

* * *

Kaden got his phone call at twenty past one. He took it on the landing. When he came back he said, to the Allfather, "I need to raise something."

The Allfather waited.

"There's a Common Sense sign on the lawn across the road. At the house on the corner. You can see it from the window."

You could. It was a white lawn sign with blue lettering, COMMON SENSE — RESPONSIBLE BORROWING, on the lawn of the grey bungalow on the corner of Lakeshore and Trout Creek, and if you stood at the third compartment and looked left past the ice you could see it through the end window. Kaden had seen it at eight. He had waited until Trish told him to raise it.

"It's within a hundred metres," Kaden said.

"Is it?" said Darcy.

They both looked at the Allfather.

The Allfather turned to the stairhead. The Chaos-Weaver went downstairs.

He came back up four minutes later with a measuring wheel. It was yellow, the size of a dinner plate, with a counter on the handle, and it belonged to the club, which used it to mark out the overflow parking on bonspiel weekends. He had borrowed it from the Hand.

He took it out the front door. All four of us went to the window at the end of the lounge, which you could do if you were a scrutineer, because nobody had designated otherwise, and Kaden opened it so we could hear.

The Chaos-Weaver started at the front step. He walked across the parking lot in a straight line toward the corner of Lakeshore and Trout Creek, pushing the wheel in front of him at a steady speed, as if he did this every Saturday. He waited at the curb for two cars. He crossed Lakeshore Drive. He stopped at the edge of the grey bungalow's lawn and looked at the counter on the wheel.

The Chaos-Weaver went up the walk and knocked on the door of the grey bungalow.

A man came out in a bathrobe. They talked. The man in the bathrobe looked at the sign, and at the wheel, and back across the road at the curling rink, where four people were standing in the end window watching him. He said something. The Chaos-Weaver said something. The man in the bathrobe went inside and came out with a black garbage bag,

and the Chaos-Weaver took it and put it over the sign, and tied the top under the sign's legs, and thanked the man in the bathrobe, and pushed the measuring wheel back across Lakeshore Drive and across the parking lot to the front step. I counted how many times he had looked at the counter. It was twice. The first time at the curb, and the second time at the lawn.

When he came up the stairs Kaden said, "What was it?"

"Ninety-eight," said the Chaos-Weaver, "and a bit."

He put the wheel down beside the HATS box. He took the top step again. A woman was coming up the stairs and he moved half a step and she went past him to the L to Z line.

"I knew it," said Kaden, and typed.

"I didn't put it there," said Darcy. "That's Rob Takacs's lawn. Rob's Common Ground."

"Then why's there a Common Sense sign on it?" said Kaden.

"Rob's brother-in-law is running for us," Darcy said. "He's on our council slate. Bernard. Rob let him put the sign up for Christmas."

"For Christmas?"

"For Christmas dinner. So Bernard would come." Darcy looked out the window at the black garbage bag. "Rob's going to be thrilled."

* * *

At two o'clock I took my break.

On my way down the stairs I passed the Chaos-Weaver. He was standing at the top step as if he had been there since eight, which he had, except for the wheel and the lawn and the garbage bag. The HATS box was beside his feet. There were four toques in it.

"Ninety-eight and a bit," I said.

"Yes."

"How much of a bit?"

He looked at me for a moment.

"Enough," he said, and moved half a step, and I went down.

THE ICE

DWMCC — PLANT LOG *(handwritten, clipboard on the compressor room door)*

SAT 17 OCT

06:10 Brine supply −8.4 / return −6.9 · Suction 22 · Head 168 · Hall RH 41%

08:30 Brine −8.3 / −6.7 · Head 172 · RH 48% (DOORS)

10:40 Brine −8.1 / −6.5 · Head 181 · RH 57% (DOORS. PEOPLE.)

12:15 Brine −8.0 / −6.4 · Head 186 · RH 62% Dehumid. ON. Scrape sh 3 & 4 btw draws

13:25 RH 66% (WINDOW?)

14:20 Bell.

The doors on the stairs to the ice were still propped with their wedges. Downstairs the bonspiel was in the third draw and the lobby smelled of chili.

There were curlers everywhere. They had been moved out of the lounge, which was theirs, by the vote, which was also, if you thought about it, theirs. So the bonspiel had set up in the lobby and in the boot room and along the hallway,

with the coffee urn on the skate-sharpening bench and the sign-in sheets taped to the trophy case. The chili was in two slow cookers on a folding table under the fire extinguisher. Rhoda's husband was running the meat draw from a card table at the door to the men's change room, and he was not allowed upstairs with it, so the curlers had to come down to him.

I went down the hall to the compressor room. I don't know why. I had never been in it. I had curled in that building for nineteen seasons and never once thought about what was under the ice. I would have said, if you'd asked me, that it was cold.

The door was open. The Hand was inside.

* * *

The compressor room at the Dolly Wiebe Memorial Curling Centre is about the size of a single garage and it is loud the way a ship is loud, from underneath. There is a compressor the colour of a school bus that was made in Mississauga in 1974. There is a long steel tank with pipes coming off it. There are pumps, and gauges, and valves with paper tags wired to them, and a fan the size of a tractor tire behind a grille in the wall, and on the wall above the workbench there is a doorbell.

It is an ordinary doorbell. A plastic box, two inches square, cream-coloured, with a speaker grille, the kind you get at the hardware store. It was screwed to the wall with a wire running from it into the junction box over the compressor. There was a

second one, I found out later, in the boot room, and a third in the lobby by the coffee urn, and a fourth, which I had walked past three hundred times without seeing, on the wall behind the bar upstairs.

They had come as a four-pack from the hardware store in Penticton, and each one had a switch on the back with sixteen tunes on it. He had set three of them to the plain ding-dong. The fourth, behind the bar, had been mounted before he found the switch, and nobody could reach it now without moving the bar fridge, so it still played the first four notes of "Für Elise." Nobody upstairs had ever noticed. The bar is loud.

He was standing by the compressor with his hand flat on the casing.

"Can I come in?" I said.

He nodded. He didn't take his hand off the compressor.

I had seen him before, of course. He had been the icemaker at Dolly Wiebe for longer than I had been curling there. He wore green work pants and a grey fleece and a toque, not a SAVE OUR SHEETS toque, a plain black one, and he was never upstairs. On Tuesday nights I would see him go past the lounge windows down on the ice, after the last end, with a scraper or a pebble can or the long squeegee, and that was all I had ever known of him.

"What's it doing?" I said.

"Working."

"Is it supposed to sound like that?"

He listened. There was a knock in it, a slow one, every few seconds, like somebody tapping a spoon on the bottom of a pot.

"No," he said. "It's been like that since '09."

* * *

He talked while he worked, if I asked him something. He didn't talk if I didn't. So I asked.

The plant cools brine, he said, which is salt water that won't freeze, and the brine goes through pipes under the ice, about twelve miles of them, in a sand floor, and comes back a degree and a half warmer, and goes through the plant again. The plant does that with a refrigerant called R-22, which you cannot buy new anymore, and has not been able to for years, because of what it does to the ozone. You can buy reclaimed. He had four cylinders of reclaimed in the corner. He told me what one of them had cost and I asked him to say it again.

The receipt for the last one was on the clipboard, under the log. It was made out to him, not to the club.

"The club's card didn't go through in August," he said, when he saw me reading it.

"Does the club know?"

"The treasurer knows."

The treasurer is Joanie Boyce, my skip. I had curled with her on Tuesday. She had not said a word about it, and neither, I was fairly sure, had he, after the once.

The thing that makes ice go bad, he said, is not warmth. It's water in the air. People are water. Every person who comes through the front door brings in the outside air and breathes on the ice, and the water in the air settles on the ice as frost, and the frost makes the rocks run slow and curl wrong. Then you scrape. Then you pebble. Then they come in again.

"How many people?"

"Today?"

"Today."

He looked at the clipboard on the door.

"Humidity's sixty-six. That's six hundred people, about. And the spiel. And the doors propped."

"Because of the stairs," I said. "Because of the voting."

"Because of the voting."

I thought about all of us up there in the lounge. Lining up. Taking off our toques. Breathing.

"Sorry," I said.

He shrugged. It wasn't a shrug that meant it was fine. It was a shrug that meant it was the case.

"Should I tell them to breathe less?"

He thought about it. "Tell them to shut whatever they've opened up there," he said. "Something's been open since twenty-five past one."

"That was us," I said.

"Shut it."

* * *

The doorbell rang while I was there.

It was twenty past two. It was very loud in that small room, and two chimes, ding-dong, like somebody at the front door of a house. I jumped. The Hand didn't. He put down his pencil and went to a valve on the far side of the compressor, the one with a red paper tag on it, and turned it a quarter turn, and then to a switch box by the grille in the wall. On the other side of that wall, outside, was the condenser, and the fan behind the grille pulled air through it, and when he threw the switch it began to turn fast. Then he put his hand back on the compressor casing.

I heard the doorbell ring again, faintly, upstairs, behind the bar, through the floor: the first four notes of "Für Elise."

"What was that?" I said.

"Head pressure."

"Is that bad?"

"It's high."

"Why does it have a doorbell?"

He looked at me as if this was the first sensible question I had asked.

There had been an alarm, he said, when the plant was put in, in 1974. It was a red light, on a panel, in this room. In 1974 there had been a full-time engineer for the plant and he had sat in this room. By 1990 the engineer was part-time. By 2005 there was no engineer, there

was him, and he was on the ice, or in the boot room, or out back clearing leaves off the condenser, or upstairs fixing the dishwasher behind the bar. The red light would come on in this room and stay on in this room, and nobody saw it, and in 2008 the plant overheated on a Saturday in February and they lost the ice for the last week of the club championship.

So in 2009 he went to the hardware store and bought four wireless doorbells, and wired the transmitter into the alarm circuit, and put the receivers wherever he might be.

"Is that allowed?" I said.

"It works," he said.

The doorbell did not ring again. He took his hand off the compressor after a while and wrote on the clipboard, in pencil, *14:20 Bell.* That was all.

* * *

On my way back up I stopped at the doors to the ice and watched the third draw.

The ice looked like ice. Sheet three had a game in the sixth end, and the skip was a man from Salmon Arm I didn't know, and he called for a draw to the button and his third threw it light. The sweepers went to it. It curled. It stopped short and to the left, about a foot in front of the house, on a patch that I could see, now that I knew to look, was a slightly different colour from the rest. Frost.

The Salmon Arm team was down by six. They conceded. They shook hands.

The Hand came out of the hall behind me with a pebble can on his back and the long wand in his hand, and stood at the end of sheet three, waiting for them to clear the ice.

"Lorna," said Arnold from the top of the stairs. "Kaden says Trish wants you. At the cloud."

I looked at the Hand. He was looking at the patch.

"Are you voting?" I said.

He looked at me. Not unkindly.

"Already did," he said.

"Which way?"

He didn't answer. He walked onto sheet three with the pebble can and began, in a long slow line from the hack to the far house, to rain fine drops of water on the ice from the wand, in a pattern I could not see but that the rocks would feel.

CAMPAIGN OFFICE

(whiteboard, 388 Lakeshore Drive, Unit C — formerly Cloud Vape Co.)

TURNOUT (DW RINK) — 8am: 0 · 9: 166 · 10: 318 · 11: 431 · 12: 472 · 1: 541 · 2: ???

RIDES → see WALLY

WAVES!!! 5:45 draw ends ~7:45 → UP IN WAVES

CHALLENGES: 0 (US) 1 (THEM)

TOQUES = SIGNS?? — ask Lorna

DON'T SAY "SAVE" WITHIN 100M

~~Bring muffins to officials~~ NO — INDUCEMENT

The Common Ground campaign office was a hundred and forty metres from the front door of the curling rink. Trish had had it measured in September, by her nephew, who was a surveyor's assistant, with a proper instrument. She liked to tell people this.

It had been a vape shop until March. The lease had six months on it and the owner had let Trish have it for the campaign for the cost of the power, on condition that nobody touch

the neon sign in the window, which was in the shape of a cloud and could not be turned off, because the switch was in a part of the building the landlord no longer had a key to. So the cloud was on all day and all night, pink, in the window behind the COMMON GROUND posters. People in Pippin Bay had been giving directions by it for a month. "It's the cloud." "Past the cloud." "Turn left at the cloud and you're at the rink."

I walked over from the rink, still on my break. Through the window you could see a long folding table with phones on it and a coffee machine, and a map of the Township taped to the wall with the three voting places circled in red, and the whiteboard.

There were ten people inside when I got there, all on phones. That is a lot of people for Pippin Bay. I knew all of them. Two of them curled with me on Tuesday nights. One was my dentist.

Trish came at me from the back with a clipboard.

"Lorna. Thank God. What's it like in there?"

"Quiet," I said. "It's half past two."

"Their guy said sixty an hour."

"He's not their guy. He's the Township's guy."

"Sixty an hour is terrible."

"He said it would be sixty an hour. It's sixty an hour."

Trish didn't hear this. Trish was looking at the whiteboard.

* * *

Trish Ambrosi could organize the Okanagan, and I say that as somebody she has organized. She got a CT scanner out of the hospital auxiliary and a gym roof out of the parent advisory

council. She knows where every person in Pippin Bay lives and how they feel about the crosswalk, and she keeps all of it on index cards, in shoeboxes, colour-coded, which she says is more secure than a computer, and which she is right about.

She had been running the Common Ground campaign since June. She had run it like a war, if wars had muffins. She had a ride list and a phone list and a door-knock list and a list of people who had said yes on the doors and a list of people who had said maybe and a list of people who had said yes but whom she did not believe. She had a list of where every Common Ground lawn sign was and a separate list of where every Common Sense lawn sign was, because she said you had to know the field.

"Rob Takacs's lawn," I said.

"Don't," said Trish.

"It's under a garbage bag."

"I know. Kaden texted. Do you know what Rob said to me? He said 'Trish, you've put a bag on my brother-in-law.'" She looked at the clipboard. "That's on Darcy."

"It was Kaden who complained."

"On my instruction. Because Darcy started it with the toques." She wrote something. "Lorna. In your view. Is a toque a sign if it's on a head?"

The room stopped talking. Ten people looked at me.

"It's got SAVE on it," said a man at the end of the table. It was Gerry Moens, who curls Thursday mixed. "The question is whether to save the sheets."

"The question," said Trish, "is whether to borrow four point eight five million dollars for a new ice plant and a new roof."

"Which," said Gerry, "saves the sheets."

Trish went to the whiteboard and wrote DON'T SAY "SAVE" WITHIN 100M, and underlined it, and turned around. "What if they wear them inside out?"

"It doesn't matter," I said. "There's a box at the top of the stairs that says HATS on it, and they put them in their pockets before they get there."

"Who's holding the box?"

"The door official."

"Is he one of ours?"

"No," I said. "He's not anybody's."

* * *

On the far side of the parking lot, past the bakery, in what had been the Golden Glow tanning salon until the spring, was the Common Sense office.

You could see it from Trish's window. That is, you could see its window. It had a whiteboard too. Somebody over there had pushed it right up to the glass, I think by accident, and from where I stood I could read it.

It said TURNOUT, and some numbers, which were the same numbers as ours. It said RIDES — SEE BEV. It said 5:45 DRAW → WAVES!!

Trish saw me looking.

"They copied that," she said.

"They copied waves?"

"The waves are mine. Nobody in this town ever thought about the curling draws until me."

"Trish. Lyle Pellerin has curled out of that building since 1979."

"Then why didn't he think of it in 2022?"

I didn't have an answer to that. Neither, I think, did Lyle.

* * *

The waves were Trish's plan for the evening. She had explained them to me at her kitchen table, on a placemat with the curling schedule on it. The last draw of the Harvest Spiel started at a quarter to six and would end about a quarter to eight: forty-eight curlers, fifteen steps from the ballot box, with fifteen minutes to get there. Trish had gone through the draw sheet and phoned every one of them who lived in the Township and had not voted, and said: Don't vote early. Vote after your game. It's right there.

"Sheets one and two first, because they're the good teams," Trish said now, at the whiteboard. "Then three and four. Then five and six, the slow ones, because they'll go to an extra end if it's close, you watch. Thirty-six of them are on my cards, Lorna, and the bylaw is going to be decided by thirty-six votes."

"You don't know that."

"I've done the cards."

I had seen the cards. She had a card for every voter in the township, and on the card it said Y or N or ? in green, red or yellow. I had seen the totals. She had the question at three hundred and some on each side and the rest yellow.

"And you think every curler in the last draw is a yes."

"I think every curler in the last draw has been listening to that compressor knock since 2009."

"The alarm plays Beethoven," I said.

"What?"

"Never mind."

* * *

Then Trish sat down across from me with her clipboard and her reading glasses and said what she had really called me over for.

"You need to challenge."

"Challenge who?"

"Someone." She turned the clipboard around. It was a printed list, three pages, of names and addresses, with yellow highlighter on about a third of them. "These are people on the voters list where the address doesn't match the BC Assessment roll. Wendy pulled it." Wendy did data entry at a property management company. "Some of them have moved. Some of them are renting. Some of them, Lorna, are bench people who don't live here at all and are on the resident list instead of the non-resident list, which means they're voting twice, here and in Vancouver."

"That's allowed, Trish. It's a different election."

"Not if they're on the resident list here when they should be on the property list. That's one vote per property, Lorna, not two. That's a cabin with two votes in it. Darcy's people are doing it on the bench. We should be doing it too."

"Trish," I said. "Darcy challenged Irene Hiebert."

"I know. And she did a beautiful job. Tamsin cried in the car." Trish put her hand on the list. "But he's on the record now, and we're not. We have zero. If it comes to a recount and there's a judge, I want us on the record."

"On the record for what?"

"For doing our job."

I looked at the list. I looked through the window, across the parking lot, at the Golden Glow tanning salon, where a woman I knew from the Bayside Pharmacy line was holding a sheet of paper up to their whiteboard and copying something off it.

"Who's that on their whiteboard?" I said.

Trish turned.

The woman at the Common Sense whiteboard was writing, under 5:45 DRAW → WAVES, a new line. We could not read it from there.

"Gerry," said Trish. "Binoculars."

Gerry had binoculars. Gerry always has binoculars. He keeps them in his truck for the eagles. He brought them in and Trish put them up to her face and read off, for the room:

"Challenge more. Exclamation mark."

Nobody said anything.

"Well," said Trish. She lowered the binoculars. She looked at the list in front of me. Then she took a highlighter, and highlighted one more name, and turned the list around so it faced me.

"Him," she said. "This one's ours. I'm sure of it. His licence says one address and his bills go to another and the roll has

a third. Just challenge him. He'll do the declaration. It's easy. Then it's one-one."

I read the name. I didn't know it. I folded the list in half and put it in my pocket, beside my appointment in its sleeve.

"Muffin?" said Trish.

"I thought muffins were an inducement."

"Not for you. You're one of ours."

I took the muffin. I walked back across the hundred and forty metres to the rink. It started to rain, a little, off the lake. When I got to the doors I put my hood up, and then at the top of the stairs I took it down, because there was a box there that said HATS, and I had nothing on my head.

SECOND VISIT

COMMON GROUND — RIDES (SAT) — DRIVER: WALLY P.
(photocopy, coffee ring)

9:15 — Mr. & Mrs. Pinto, 14 Apple Ct → Rink · RETURN 9:45

10:00 — Gus Reimer, Sunnyside Lodge → Rink · RETURN — he'll call

11:30 — Mrs. Nakamura → Rink · RETURN

~~12:00 — Blaine — CANCELLED (voted mail)~~

3:15 — Mrs. V. Kowalski, Sunnyside Lodge → Rink · RETURN — "after tea"

4:30 — Hudsons (2) + walker

The All-Seeing came back at ten past three.

He came up the stairs with his clipboard and stood by the bar shutter with the Allfather, and said, in that same low voice, as if he were telling him what time it was:

"You've got a dead hour now. Twenty past three to twenty past four. You'll get nobody. Maybe one."

"Maybe one," said the Allfather.

"Then the Lodge brings its second group at four-thirty, and the six o'clock supper people, and the spiel."

"Yes."

The All-Seeing looked around the lounge. It was empty except for us. Elaine was doing a crossword of her own. Merv was sitting at the ballot box with his hands folded. The Seeker was reading his binder, which I would not have thought could be read for pleasure. The Chaos-Weaver was at the top of the stairs. Below him, the stairs were empty, and the ice was between draws, and through the open doors you could hear the Hand's scraper, and nothing else.

"Every election," the All-Seeing said. "Between three and four. People are at the hockey game, or they're having a nap, or they haven't thought about it yet. The ones who were going to come in the morning came in the morning. The ones who are going to come after supper are thinking about supper. Nothing moves. Every voting place in the province does it."

He wrote 0 on his clipboard, in the FORECAST column, beside 3:20–4:20. Then he asked for two of the officials.

"The Legion's seniors come at half past four," he said. "They'll run forty minutes in the line. I'd like Bernice and Doug till six."

"No," said the Allfather.

"You'll have nobody here till twenty past four."

"I'll have nobody here till twenty past four. Then the Lodge brings its second group, and at six I'll have the supper people and the spiel, and I'll want them both, and they'll be standing in the Legion's line."

"Forty minutes," said the All-Seeing again.

"Send them the school's."

The two of them stood by the bar shutter for a moment, not looking at each other. Bernice, who had heard all of it, went on squaring the voters list as if she were not the subject. Then the All-Seeing wrote something on his clipboard and went to look at the list with Elaine.

* * *

At eighteen minutes past three a white Buick pulled up at the front doors in the drop-off zone, which it was not supposed to be in, and a man in a COMMON GROUND windbreaker got out and went round and opened the passenger door.

"That's Wally," Kaden said, looking out the window. "That's our ride."

Wally Pettinger has driven for every candidate in Pippin Bay who has ever asked him, for thirty years. He did it for Common Sense in 2022 and for Common Ground this time and, in provincial elections, for whoever phoned him first. He likes to drive. He has said in the Packet that democracy is the best excuse he knows to take the Buick out. He wears the windbreaker of whoever phoned him first. He was not, I should say, in any danger. Anybody is allowed to give anybody a ride to vote, as long as there is no obligation on the elector, and Wally has never obliged anybody to do anything in his life.

He helped Velma Kowalski out of the Buick.

Velma is eighty-eight and lives at Sunnyside Lodge. She is about five feet tall and wears a powder-blue coat and a purple hat, and she curled out of this building, with Dolly Wiebe, in the 1960s, as Dolly's lead, before her knees. She is in the

photograph. Not the one over our chairs. The other one, the 1966 team photo in the trophy case, on the second shelf, in which she is twenty-eight and smiling and nobody else is.

Wally walked her to the stairs. The Chaos-Weaver came down the stairs and met them halfway and took her other arm, and the two of them brought her up one step at a time, and she talked all the way.

"—and then I said to him, Walter, I've been up these stairs a thousand times, I can do it once more, and he said—"

"I said use the railing," said Wally.

"He said use the railing." She reached the top. She looked around the lounge. "Oh," she said. "They've closed the bar."

"It's an election, Mrs. Kowalski," said the Allfather.

"I know it's an election," said Velma. "That's why I came. I like an election." She looked at him. "I know you."

"I don't believe so, ma'am."

"I've seen you. At an election."

"I work a lot of them."

"I know you do," said Velma Kowalski. "That's where I've seen you."

* * *

Elaine found her on the list. She found her at once. Kowalski, Velma, Sunnyside Lodge, 300 Orchard Road. There was a ruler line already under it.

Elaine looked up.

"Mrs. Kowalski, you've voted."

"Yes, dear."

"This morning. At a quarter past ten."

"Yes," said Velma, "I came with the other ones. The young lady with the blue coat. Bev. She's a lovely driver. She takes the corners slower than Walter."

Wally had his arms folded at the top of the stairs. He did not look surprised.

Darcy was looking at the ceiling.

"Bev," Kaden said quietly, typing, "is Common Sense."

Bev was RIDES — SEE BEV on the whiteboard in the Golden Glow window. Velma Kowalski had said yes to both campaigns on the phone.

"Mrs. Kowalski," said the Allfather. "You can only vote once."

"I know that, dear," said Velma. "I'm not here to vote."

"What are you here for?"

"Walter offered," said Velma, "and I said I would come and have my tea. I have it here every year. They do it upstairs at the bar, with a little biscuit. There's always a pot." She looked at the bar shutter. BAR CLOSED — ELECTION. "Oh dear," she said. "Not this year."

* * *

Darcy stood up.

He stood up the way he had stood up for Irene Hiebert. Then he didn't say anything. There was a rule here about something, possibly several, and you could see him trying to work out which side of it he was on.

Darcy sat down.

The Allfather went to the end of the bar where the officials had set up their table, with the big steel coffee urn they had brought from the Township office, and a box of the kind of tea bags that come in paper envelopes, and a packet of digestive biscuits that Bernice had bought at the Bayside Pharmacy that morning, which was not an inducement to anyone, because it was for the officials.

He made a cup of tea. He put it on a saucer, which Bernice had brought from home, because Bernice brings a saucer, with one digestive biscuit. He brought it over to the chair by the end window, the one that looked out past the ice to the corner where Rob Takacs's black garbage bag sat on its sign. He pulled the chair out. He put the tea on the windowsill beside it.

"Mrs. Kowalski."

She sat. She drank her tea. She looked down at the ice, where the fourth draw was in its first end, and said, "Who's that on four? They're throwing it like a Wiebe," and nobody answered, because nobody knew.

* * *

She stayed half an hour. She told us about the 1966 provincials in Kimberley, which Dolly lost in an extra end because a man in the crowd dropped a bottle on the ice, and how Dolly made him come out and scrape it himself. She asked who was running for mayor and when Kaden told her she said, "Oh, both of them. I know both their mothers."

Nobody else came up the stairs. Not one person.

At ten to four Velma finished her biscuit and stood up and Wally came over to take her arm. She went to the trophy case on her way past and put her hand flat on the glass on the second shelf.

"I was a lovely lead," she said.

Then she looked at me, and at Arnold, and at the four chairs under Dolly's photograph.

"Which of you is for the roof?"

I put my hand up. Like a schoolgirl.

"Good," said Velma. "It leaks over sheet five. It's leaked over sheet five since Trudeau. The first one." She looked at Arnold. "And you're against?"

"I am," said Arnold.

"Why?"

"The interest," said Arnold.

"Oh, well," said Velma. "That's a reason." She patted his arm. "Arnold Fehr. You did the last one, didn't you? The one in the nineties."

"Ninety-eight," said Arnold.

"Well, that's held," said Velma, and let Wally and the Chaos-Weaver take her down the stairs.

* * *

The All-Seeing came over before he left.

He stood beside the trophy case. He looked at the place where she had put her hand on the glass.

"One," said the Allfather. "You said maybe one."

"She didn't vote," said the All-Seeing.

"No."

"Then it's nobody." He wrote 0 in the ACTUAL column, beside the 0 in the FORECAST column, and looked at them. "It's always nobody between three-twenty and four-twenty." And he went out, and down the stairs, and drove off in the white Township Ford to the next voting place, where I suppose it was also nobody.

The tea cup was still on the windowsill. Nobody took it away until after the count.

SUPPER

TOWNSHIP OF PIPPIN BAY — STREET NAME CHANGES (ADDRESS HISTORY — REGISTRATION BINDER, TAB 4)

1962 — Orchard Road (unpaved; Kessler Packing to Trout Creek)

1979 — Bylaw 412: Orchard Road between Trout Creek and the lake renamed **Lakeshore Drive**; civic numbers reassigned (odd/even reversed)

2011 — Bylaw 1688: Lakeshore Drive north of the Highway 97 bypass renamed **Lakeshore Drive North**; civic numbers +2000

Note: Orchard Road (remaining portion, east of Trout Creek) unchanged — see Sunnyside Lodge (300 Orchard Rd)

At twenty to six Arnold unscrewed his thermos.

It was not coffee. I had assumed it was coffee all day. It was borscht, the summer kind, with the dill and the potatoes and the beet greens, the way the Mennonite women up the bench make it, and when he took the lid off the lounge smelled of it, and Elaine said, “Oh, Arnold,” from the list.

He had brought two cups. The lid of the thermos and a second one in his jacket pocket, a plastic cup, folded flat. He

poured the lid for himself and the second for me, without asking, and handed it across.

"My wife's," he said. "I make it now."

I drank it. It was very good. I said so.

"It's better the second day," Arnold said. "This is the second day."

* * *

We had been sitting side by side since a quarter past seven, apart from my break, and had not talked very much. Darcy had taken a dozen phone calls on the landing, I counted, and come back from each of them a little quieter.

I had not been planning to ask Arnold anything. But it was the borscht, and the room was empty, and the supper wave had not started yet.

"Why are you against it?"

He put his cup down on the arm of the chair.

"I'm not against the rink."

"I know."

"Do you?"

"You curl Wednesdays. Seniors. You play lead."

"I play lead," said Arnold, "because I'm too slow to sweep for anybody else."

He told me about 1998.

In 1998 the roof of the Dolly Wiebe Memorial Curling Centre had been leaking over sheet five for twenty years, and the club had come to council, and council had sent it to Arnold in finance, and Arnold had written the loan bylaw. Six hundred

and forty thousand dollars, over twenty years. The bylaw had passed council without a vote of the electors, because it was small enough not to need one, and the club had got its new roof.

"It still leaks over sheet five," I said.

"It leaks over sheet five," said Arnold, "because the roof they bought in 1998 was the roof they could afford in 1998, and the roof they could afford in 1998 was not the roof that would stop it leaking over sheet five, because the leak over sheet five is not in the roof. It's in the flashing where the 1974 extension meets the 1961 building, and you can't fix it without taking both roofs off. Which is what this bylaw does."

"So you should be for it."

"I should be for the roof."

"Then what?"

He looked at me. He took his glasses off.

"Four point eight five million dollars, twenty-five years, at the Municipal Finance Authority's rate. The annual debt servicing is about three hundred and fifteen thousand. The Township has two thousand eight hundred and some taxable folios. Do you know how many members the curling club has?"

"Two hundred and forty."

"Two hundred and twelve, paid up," said Arnold. "As of the first. The rest are on the invoice."

I didn't say anything.

"For the plant," said Arnold, "I'd vote yes tomorrow. It's 1974. It runs on a gas they don't make. He keeps it alive with his hands. It's going to die and when it dies there's no ice, and when there's no ice there's no club, and when there's no

club there's no building, and I'm not a fool. But the roof was a hundred thousand in the 2019 estimate and it's two point one million in this one, because somebody decided the new roof should have solar panels and a ten-year warranty and a design that makes the building look like a ski lodge from the highway. And the staff report doesn't say who decided that. I read it four times. It's not in there." He put his glasses back on. "So I'm against it. Because it's two bylaws pretending to be one, and the second one hasn't been explained."

"Then why didn't you say that?"

"I did," said Arnold. "In the Packet. Four letters."

"I read them."

"I know you did. You wrote back to two of them."

I had. Under my own name. I had called him, in one of them, a man who had spent his career counting other people's money.

"That was a fair point," said Arnold, and picked up his cup again.

"The solar panels are the grant," I said.

He looked at me.

"The federal one. Green community buildings. It pays forty per cent of a new plant if the building meets the energy standard, and it doesn't meet the energy standard with a 1974 roof on it. No panels, no grant. No grant, the plant on its own costs nearly what this bylaw does, and you'd be against that too."

"That isn't in the staff report."

"Appendix F."

Arnold took his glasses off again.

"I read to Appendix E," he said.

"And the ski lodge is the snow load. The 1961 roof's rated for half what we get now. They had an engineer up there in March. He wouldn't stand on it."

Arnold was quiet for a while. Elaine, at the list, had stopped pretending to do her crossword.

"Then it should be in the report," he said. "Not behind it."

"It's in the report. Appendix F is in the report."

He put his glasses back on. He looked into his cup.

* * *

Kaden had been listening to all of this.

"So are you for it now?" Kaden said.

"I'm against the interest rate," said Arnold.

"Can they change the interest rate?"

"Not today."

Kaden typed something. I saw the screen. He had written *Arnold is against the interest rate* and then deleted it and written *nothing new here* and sent that.

I had won the argument, I think. Arnold was still against it, for a reason I could not answer.

* * *

The supper wave started at six.

It came up the stairs the way the All-Seeing had said it would, people with their coats still on, smelling of the outside. Families with children who had to be told not to touch the ballot

box. A hockey team of fourteen-year-olds, in their jackets, with their fathers, who had come to watch their fathers vote, and stood in a clump at the masking tape with their hands jammed in their jacket pockets.

One of them asked the Seeker if he could register.

"Date of birth?" said the Seeker.

The boy told him.

"Twenty-thirty. Bring two pieces of identification."

The boy got out his wallet and laid on the table a Subway card and a library card. The Seeker looked at both of them carefully.

"One of these has your address on it," he said. "Bring the other one in four years."

At six-fifteen a man came up the stairs and went to the Seeker.

I knew the name before I knew the face. It was the name Trish had highlighted on the list in my pocket.

Lionel Szabo.

He was about seventy-five. He had a driver's licence and a FortisBC bill. He said he wasn't on the list and didn't know why, he'd voted in 2022, he'd voted in every one. The Seeker looked him up on the laptop. He wasn't there. The Seeker looked at his driver's licence. It said 518 Orchard Road. The FortisBC bill said 2518 Lakeshore Drive North.

I took the list out of my pocket. I unfolded it. His name was highlighted in yellow and beside it Wendy had written, in pen, *3 addresses — licence / bill / roll ALL DIFFERENT*.

I stood up.

Arnold looked up from the cryptic.

Kaden looked up from his phone.

The Allfather looked at me from the ballot box.

"I," I said, "would like to challenge this elector."

* * *

Nobody in that room had expected it. I hadn't expected it. Darcy looked at me with something close to admiration and Kaden looked at me with something close to horror and Lionel Szabo, who had a FortisBC bill in one hand and a driver's licence in the other, looked at me as if I was a bird that had come in through a window.

"On what grounds?" said the Allfather.

"Not entitled to vote," I said. "He has—" I looked at the list. "His licence and his bill have different addresses. And the assessment roll has a third."

"He's registering," said the Allfather. "Not voting yet."

"Yes."

"Let him finish registering. You can challenge him before he's handed a ballot."

I sat down.

The Seeker had not looked up at any of this. He had opened the blue binder to Tab 4.

"Mr. Szabo," he said. "What year did you get your licence?"

"First one? Sixty-eight."

"And you lived at 518 Orchard Road."

"I've always lived there."

"You live," said the Seeker, "at 2518 Lakeshore Drive North."

"I live at the same house."

"Yes," said the Seeker, and turned the binder round, so that Lionel could see it, and then a little further, so that I could see it, which he did not need to do.

He showed Lionel the address history. Orchard Road, 1962. In 1979, the Township had renamed the lake end of Orchard Road to Lakeshore Drive and reversed the odd and even numbers, so that 518 Orchard Road became 517 Lakeshore Drive. In 2011, when the bypass went through, everything on Lakeshore Drive north of the highway became Lakeshore Drive North and got two thousand added to its number. So 517 became 2517. Then the Seeker turned two more pages and found the 2012 correction, which nobody in Pippin Bay remembered, in which the Township discovered that it had reversed the odds and evens wrong in 1979 on the four blocks north of Trout Creek, and fixed them, so that 2517 became 2518.

"And the roll," I said, before I could stop myself. "The assessment roll has a third address."

"The roll," said the Seeker, "has 517 Lakeshore Drive. Because somebody told BC Assessment in 1979, and nobody told them in 2011, or in 2012." He turned one more page. "I can't fix that. You can phone them."

He did not need anything else. Lionel Szabo had two documents, each showing his name and his residence, one with his signature, and they showed the same lot, which the Seeker could show anybody in the room on paper, as he just had. He registered him. Elaine reached for a ballot.

The Allfather looked at me.

"Scrutineer," he said. "Do you wish to challenge?"

I looked at Lionel Szabo with his hand out for the ballot. I remembered now where I knew him from. He skips the Thursday men's. He has a SAVE OUR SHEETS toque. He was wearing it on the way up, and he had put it in his pocket at the top step, before the Chaos-Weaver had to ask.

"No," I said.

Elaine gave him the ballot. The Allfather wrote nothing on anything. There was nothing to write.

* * *

Lionel Szabo voted. He came past us on his way to the stairs and stopped.

"Lorna Petrasek," he said. "You play second for Joanie Boyce on Tuesdays."

"I do," I said.

"You were going to challenge me."

"I was," I said. "I'm sorry, Lionel."

He looked at me for a moment.

"I'm at the rink every Thursday," he said. "You could have asked me."

Then he went back to the registration table, and shook the Seeker's hand, and said, "Forty-seven years I've been trying to find out what my address is. Thirty seconds," and went down the stairs.

* * *

Arnold handed me the thermos lid without a word. There was still some borscht in it. I drank it.

Kaden's phone buzzed. He looked at it and then, carefully, did not show me. I held out my hand. He gave it to me.

KADEN SAYS LORNA CHALLENGED!!! 1-1!!! Trish had written. *putting it on the board*

I typed with Kaden's phone. *This is Lorna. I didn't challenge him. He lives where he says he lives. Don't put it on the board.*

kaden said you stood up

I sat down.

There was a long pause with the dots. Then: *ok*.

I gave Kaden back his phone. Arnold had his pen out.

"Eight letters," he said. "'Address, in a state of change.' Ends in E."

I didn't know it. He didn't fill it in.

THE LINE

NOTICE TO ELECTORS — CLOSE OF VOTING

Voting closes at **8:00 p.m.** Electors who are in the voting place, or in line to vote, at 8:00 p.m. are entitled to vote.

No other person may vote after the close of voting. The decision of the Presiding Election Official as to who is entitled to vote under this provision is final.

At seven-forty the last draw was in its seventh end, and the line went down the stairs, through the lobby, past the chili, and out the front doors.

The All-Seeing had said the worst of it would be between six-thirty and the close. It was. Every person in Pippin Bay who had meant to vote and not got round to it had got round to it at once. They came in from the dark and the rain in their coats with their hoods up, and in the lobby they put their hoods down, and on the stairs they took their toques off, and by the time they got to the top step there was nothing on any of them but their faces.

The Chaos-Weaver stood at the top step with his HATS box. He had not left the top step since the garbage bag, except for Velma Kowalski. When somebody came up with a COMMON SENSE button still on their jacket, he would say "Evening" in that mild voice, and they would look down, and take it off, and put it in their pocket, without his having said a word about it.

I had been there twelve hours and forty minutes. My back hurt. I had eaten half a muffin, a cup of borscht and four digestive biscuits, which I am told is an inducement, but not for me.

* * *

At seven-forty-four the first wave came up.

You could hear it before you could see it. Down on the ice the games on sheets one and two had finished early, as Trish had said they would, and the curlers shook hands and came through the doors to the lobby still in their sliders, and up the stairs, past the line, and I watched them realize at about the fourth step that the line was the line, and they were in it, at the end of it, down on the stairs.

The Chaos-Weaver didn't move from the top. He didn't need to. The line knew where it was.

Kaden texted Trish: *WAVE 1 IN LINE*

Trish texted back a thumbs up and a curling stone and a heart, and then a second message, *DONT SAY SAVE*.

At seven-fifty the second wave came up. Sheets three and four. They got into the line on the stairs below the first wave, and two of them were from Kelowna, which they said to each

other on the stairs, and the Seeker came down and asked them where they lived, and they said Kelowna, and he told them they were not entitled to vote in Pippin Bay, so they would not wait. They stayed in the line anyway to keep their team company. Nobody minded. It was not a rule.

Across the parking lot I could see, through the end window, the pink cloud in the window of the vape shop, and beyond it, the light in the Golden Glow tanning salon. There were people standing in both windows looking at the rink.

And in between them, on the Lakeshore Drive sidewalk, under an umbrella, was Trish.

She was standing very still on a particular square of concrete. I knew which one. Her nephew had marked it in September, with a little cross in orange spray paint, which you could still see if you knew. A hundred metres and ten centimetres from the front step of the Dolly Wiebe Memorial Curling Centre. The closest a campaign director in a Common Ground windbreaker could stand to her waves. She had walked up from the cloud, forty metres, to stand on it.

She was holding her clipboard against her chest under the umbrella. She was not on her phone. She was just watching the doors.

Fifteen metres down the sidewalk from her, under a second umbrella, on a square of concrete of his own, was a man in a Common Sense windbreaker whom I did not at first recognize, and then did. It was Bev's husband. He was watching the doors too.

They did not look at each other. They had, I was fairly sure, each paced it.

Darcy's phone buzzed. He read it. He put it face down on his knee.

"Their waves," said Darcy.

"What about them?"

"They're the same people."

I didn't understand.

"Your waves and our waves," said Darcy. "Bev did the draw sheet too. She phoned every curler in the last draw who hadn't voted yet and told them to come up after the game. Trish did the same. They're the same forty-eight curlers." He looked at the stairs. "They've been phoned by both of us. Twice."

"Which way are they voting?"

"I don't think," said Darcy, "they're voting for either of us. I think they're voting so we'll stop phoning."

* * *

At seven-fifty-six I went to the end window and looked down at the ice.

Sheets five and six were still playing.

Trish had said they would be. She had said it at her kitchen table with the placemat, and she had said it at the vape shop, and she had been right. Sheets five and six were the slow games. On sheet five the score was tied coming home and the skips were standing in the house together arguing about a measure, and on sheet six somebody had just thrown a draw that came up short on a patch the Hand had scraped that afternoon, which

had frosted again since, and the skip had sat down on the bench to think.

There were eight curlers on those two sheets who lived in Pippin Bay and had not voted. I knew all of them. Three of them curled Tuesdays. One of them was Darcy's wife.

"Darcy," I said. "Look."

He came to the window. He looked down at sheet six, where his wife was sweeping.

"Oh, Carla," he said, and phoned her.

We heard it ring. Not in the lounge: through the floor, faintly, in the boot room, in her curling bag, under her boots. Then it stopped, and Darcy listened to her voicemail, which said, "Hi, it's Carla, I'm curling," and he hung up.

I went down the stairs. A scrutineer may leave the voting place at any time. I had read that too. I went past the line, which did not like it, and through the doors to the ice, and out onto the end of sheet five in my good shoes, and shouted.

"Joanie! It closes at eight!"

Joanie Boyce looked up from the measure. She is my skip. She has been my skip since 2007.

"We're in the building!" she shouted.

"You have to be in the line!"

"We're measuring!"

The other skip looked at me, and then at Joanie, and said, "Is she allowed to do that?"

"I'm a scrutineer," I said, which was not an answer to anything.

On sheet six Carla had one rock left to throw. I shouted at her too. She lifted a hand without looking, the way you do when somebody calls the line on a takeout, and settled into the hack.

When I turned round the Chaos-Weaver was coming down the stairs.

He came down on the wall side, not quickly, past the line. Past the first wave and the second wave. Past the two Kelowna curlers keeping their team company. Into the lobby, past me, past the chili and the meat draw table, where Rhoda's husband was folding up his card table. Along the line where it ran out the front doors and down the steps outside, into the rain.

I went to the doors and watched him.

He stood behind the last person in the line, a lady with an umbrella. He looked at his watch. Then he turned around and faced the parking lot.

It was eight o'clock.

He didn't say anything. He just stood behind her so there wasn't a behind her.

* * *

At eight o'clock and about thirty seconds a man came across the parking lot at a jog with his hood up.

His name was Clint Dumont. He works for the Township, as it happens, in roads. I know him to nod to. He came up the steps of the rink to the Chaos-Weaver, at the end of the line, and stopped, because there was nowhere to go.

"I was in line," said Clint.

"Line's closed," said the Chaos-Weaver.

"I was in the parking lot line."

"There's no parking lot line."

"I was in my truck," said Clint. "Waiting for it to go down. There was no point standing in the rain. I was watching the door. I was in line."

"You were in your truck."

"In the line," said Clint, "in my truck."

The Chaos-Weaver looked at him. He wasn't unkind about it. He just looked at Clint, in the rain, and waited.

"I'll get the Allfather," he said.

The Allfather came down. It took him less than a minute. Clint had got through his whole argument a second time by then, and had added the hockey game, which had gone to overtime on his truck radio, and which he said was a reason.

The Allfather listened to all of it. Then he said:

"You weren't in line at eight. I'm sorry. You can't vote."

"Says who?"

"Says me."

"Can I appeal?"

"No," said the Allfather. "It's final."

It was raining.

Clint stood there a moment longer. Then he said, "Overtime," to nobody in particular, and went back to his truck. He did not drive away. He sat in it. I suppose the game was still on.

* * *

At three minutes past eight the end on sheet six finished.

Carla came through the doors to the lobby with her broom under her arm and her toque on her head and looked up the stairs at the line, and at the Chaos-Weaver coming back up behind it, and shouted up the stairs:

"Oh, for God's sake. Darcy, I told you I'd come up after."

From the top of the stairs Darcy said, "Yes, dear."

Then the curlers from sheet five came through, the ones who'd been measuring. They had tied. They were going to an extra end. They had come out to tell their families in the lobby that they'd be another fifteen minutes, and they found out about the polls closing the same way Carla had. Joanie came over to me with her broom and her SAVE OUR SHEETS toque.

"You said the line," she said.

"I said the line."

"I thought you meant the hog line."

Then she lifted both arms, and let them fall.

Eight curlers. All of them Trish's. All of them Bev's. I knew all of them, and I could not have told you how a single one of them would have voted.

* * *

I went back up the stairs behind the last voter.

The last person to vote in the Dolly Wiebe Memorial Curling Centre was the lady with the umbrella. She was about seventy. She came up the stairs at twelve minutes past eight, with the Chaos-Weaver one step behind her, and voted, and walked her folder to the box, and Merv held the flap.

The Chaos-Weaver stopped at the top step. He looked down at the empty stairs behind him. Then he picked up the HATS box, which had four toques in it, still, nobody's, and put it behind the bar shutter, and closed the door to the stairs.

"That's the line," he said, to the Allfather.

"That's the line," said the Allfather.

The Chaos-Weaver's shoulders were wet through from the steps. They stayed wet until after midnight, because nobody may leave a voting place during a count, including to find a towel, and he did not ask.

It was eight-thirteen. Downstairs, through the floor, faintly, we heard sheet five start its extra end.

THE COUNT

RECORD OF OBJECTIONS TO ACCEPTANCE OR REJECTION OF BALLOTS

(Local Government Act, s. 140)

Voting Place: Dolly Wiebe Memorial Curling Centre (Upper Lounge) · Ballot Box No. 07

Time	Ruling	Objection and ground
9:52 p.m.	Question: accepted, intent clear	A. Fehr (Against): “For the record”
10:31 p.m.	Entire ballot: accepted, intent clear	D. Lund (Pellerin et al.): mixed marks, 2022 guide, p. 32
11:18 p.m.	Question: rejected, two marks	L. Petrasek (For): second mark is a correction
11:18 p.m.	Question: rejected, two marks	A. Fehr (Against): second mark is a vote
12:31 a.m.	Question: accepted (NO)	K. Bhatt: not received; no standing on the question
12:40 a.m.	Entire ballot: accepted	D. Lund (Pellerin et al.): identifies the elector

The Allfather broke the seals at eight-twenty-two.

He broke the Township’s two seals with the side cutters from the canvas bag, and showed us the numbers on them,

0047113 and 0047114, and Rhoda checked them against the form and said "Yes" both times.

Then there was Darcy's tape.

LUND REALTY — YOUR NEIGHBOUR IN REAL ESTATE, folded under, across the lid. Darcy's initials on it, in ballpoint, from eight o'clock that morning.

"I'd like to break that myself," said Darcy.

"You can watch me break it," said the Allfather.

He cut it. He showed Darcy the two ends. Darcy looked at them and nodded, and the cut had gone between the D and the L of his initials, and that was the last of LUND REALTY in the Dolly Wiebe Memorial Curling Centre that day, apart from the vest.

* * *

Every ballot has to be held up so that the people present can see how it's marked. That's section 138. The people present were the Allfather; the officials, who were counting; the four of us, under Dolly Wiebe; and the candidates for mayor, who may not come into a voting place while voting is going on but may come to the count.

They had come up at a quarter past eight, before the seals were broken, because once the count starts nobody comes in and nobody goes out. Tamsin Hiebert came up the stairs first, and a minute later Lyle Pellerin came up behind her, and they had obviously met in the parking lot, and obviously not spoken, and the Chaos-Weaver stood aside for both of them at the same time, half a step each.

They stood at the back wall, by the bar shutter. Side by side, because there was only one bit of back wall.

Tamsin is forty-four, a nurse at the hospital, with her mother's chin. Lyle is sixty-six, retired from the lumber yard, and has been on council for three terms, and has curled out of this building since 1979, and on Thursday nights plays in the mixed league as a spare. I have curled against him. He throws a heavy rock and apologizes for it.

"Tamsin," he said.

"Lyle."

"Your mother all right?"

"She's furious."

"Good," said Lyle. "She's a wonderful woman."

"She says Darcy's father would've been too frightened."

Lyle thought about this.

"He would have," he said.

* * *

You count a composite ballot one office at a time. That is what nobody tells you. Our ballot had Mayor, one to be elected; Council, six; and the question. The officials unfold the ballots into stacks of fifty and do Mayor, every one held up and called and tallied. Then they do Council, every one. Then they do the question.

There were one thousand one hundred and sixty-two ballots in the box.

I had read the Act all summer. I had not understood what one thousand one hundred and sixty-two would feel like, three

times over, starting at half past eight at night, after thirteen and a half hours in a chair.

* * *

Mayor took an hour and ten minutes.

Merv held up. Doug called. Rhoda and Bernice kept the tally sheets, one each, side by side, with a tick for each vote in a box of five, the way you'd count anything that matters.

"Hiebert."

Tick.

"Pellerin."

Tick.

"Pellerin."

Tick.

"Hiebert."

Tick.

"Pellerin."

Tick, tick, tick, tick, and then a line through the four, and that's five.

You watch the ballot. I mean that you are required to watch it, and also that you can't stop. Merv held each one up at the height of his face and turned it slowly so that all of us along the trophy case could see it, and the candidates at the back wall, and Doug read it, and then it went down on the right pile. And another one came up. I watched the first two hundred hard. I watched the next four hundred as hard as I could. After that I watched them the way you watch the road on the Coquihalla at night.

Kaden watched the first fifty and then started typing them. He was texting Trish a running total. Trish was texting back, every time, a number of her own from somewhere else, and then *ok* or *hmm* or once, *THE LEGION IS KILLING US*.

At the back wall, Tamsin Hiebert and Lyle Pellerin stood with their arms folded and watched their names go by, one at a time, in Doug's voice. Neither of them said anything. Every forty or fifty ballots one of them would shift their weight. Once, about four hundred in, Lyle went and got two chairs from the end of the room and put them against the back wall, one for him and one for her. She sat. He sat.

A little after nine Bernice sent the digestive packet along the back wall without asking anybody. Tamsin took one and passed it to Lyle. Lyle took one and passed it back. They ate them at the same time, looking straight ahead, chewing in step.

Any ballot with a strange mark on it anywhere, Merv put to one side, face down, in its own pile, and the Allfather did not rule on it then. He ruled on them between stacks, one at a time, through the night, so that each strange ballot would be looked at once, properly, and not three times in a hurry.

At nine-forty Rhoda and Bernice added their tally sheets. They agreed. They read the totals to the Allfather.

"Pellerin, five hundred and eighty-one. Hiebert, five hundred and forty-four. Rejected, twenty-three. Set aside, fourteen."

Lyle Pellerin did not move. Tamsin Hiebert did not move. Kaden texted something. Darcy did not text anything. He was looking at his wife's name on his phone. She had texted him

a picture from the lobby of her team holding a ribbon. They had won the B event.

"That's this room," said Lyle. "The Legion's different."

"I know," said Tamsin.

They sat.

* * *

Before Council, the Allfather said we could stand up for five minutes. He said it to the room, not to anybody.

I stood up. My knees made a noise. I walked to the end window and looked down at the ice.

The bonspiel was over. The lights were half off over the sheets and full on in the lobby, where the last of the curlers were putting on their coats. On sheet five, under the place where the 1974 roof met the 1961 one, there was a bucket. It was sitting on the ice. It had a pebble of water in the bottom of it.

It had been raining since two.

The Hand came out onto sheet five with a scraper and moved the bucket a foot to the left, and scraped where it had been, and put the bucket back. He looked up at the roof. Then he looked up at the lounge window, at me, and I lifted my hand. He nodded and went back to the scraper.

* * *

Council took two and a quarter hours.

It took two and a quarter hours because each ballot had up to six marks on it, among twelve candidates, and every one

had to be called. Doug called each ballot top to bottom, name by name. Rhoda and Bernice kept twelve columns each. Merv's arm began to shake at about ten to ten and Elaine took over holding up, and Merv sat down to sort.

"Abernathy. Bains. Hiebert-Cho. Lukacs. Pellerin-Ross. Vandenberg."

That last one was confusing. One of Common Ground's six was Tamsin's sister-in-law, Linnea Hiebert-Cho, and one of Common Sense's was Lyle's daughter-in-law, Dana Pellerin-Ross. So every time Doug read "Hiebert-Cho" or "Pellerin-Ross," Tamsin and Lyle both sat up in their chairs at the back wall, and then sat back.

The first objection was at eight minutes to ten. It was Arnold's, and it was in my favour.

* * *

It was the first ballot from the set-aside pile. Elaine held it up, and it had a stone on it.

It was in the box beside YES. Where an X should have been, someone had drawn, carefully, in pencil, a curling stone. Seen from above. A circle with a smaller circle inside it, and a handle across the top, and a curved line coming off the back of it to show the rotation. It was well drawn. It had been done slowly.

The Allfather held it up to the light.

"Mayor: Hiebert, valid mark. Council: six valid marks." He held the ballot a moment longer.

Darcy had a binder. I had not seen it all day. It came out from under his chair now, white, three-ring, tabbed in four

colours, and on the spine it said SCRUTINEER'S GUIDE — 2022 GENERAL LOCAL ELECTION.

"Cross or tick," said Darcy. "Page thirty-one. That's a stone."

The Allfather did not look at the binder. He reached into the canvas bag and took out a book, spiral-bound, newer, with the year on the cover, and opened it to a page he had already marked with a strip of the green bar-mirror sheeting, and read it. He read it twice.

"This year," he said, "a ballot must be accepted if the voter's intent is clear." He looked at the stone. "In the YES. In-turn. Accepted."

Darcy turned to page thirty-one and looked at it as though page thirty-one owed him money.

Then Arnold stood up.

"I object," he said.

The Allfather waited.

"For the record," said Arnold. "It's a good stone. I'd like my name next to it."

The Allfather wrote it down. *A. Fehr. "For the record."*

Arnold sat. He kept his eyes on the ballot. It was in my favour and we both knew it, and I have never been so annoyed by a kindness in my life.

* * *

At half past ten, from the set-aside pile, there was a ballot with an X for mayor and ticks for council.

Somebody had come into the compartment, looked out the window at sheet three, and put an X beside Hiebert. Then they

had gone down the council list and, perhaps after a moment's thought about the difference, put a tick beside six names. Then they had gone to the question and put a tick beside YES.

"Mixed marks," said Darcy, already turning. "Page thirty-two. Rejected in total."

The Allfather opened the spiral book again. He did not need to look for the page. He read it anyway.

"Not this year," he said. "Accepted."

"I object," said Darcy.

"Recorded."

Kaden had not said anything. He was looking at the ticks, very neat, six of them.

"That's my aunt," he said. "That's how she does her lists."

"Then it's uniquely marked," said Darcy, and he looked pleased for about one second.

"Your aunt's ticks," said the Allfather, "are not on the voters list."

Darcy closed the binder. He did it slowly, the way you close a hymn book when you have been singing the wrong verse, and put it back under his chair, and did not take it out again.

* * *

At ten to eleven there was a ballot with twelve marks for council. Every candidate. Both slates.

"Twelve," said Doug. "Every one."

"That's the Christmas card list," said Bernice.

"Council: more marks than seats," said the Allfather. "That part's rejected. Mayor and question stand."

Nobody objected. Lyle and Tamsin, at the back wall, looked at each other for the first time all night, and then away.

* * *

At eleven there was a knock on the door at the top of the stairs.

It was Lyle Pellerin's wife, Bonnie, with the last of the bonspiel chili in a slow cooker, who had come from the parking lot to see whether her husband was dead. Nobody may enter or leave a voting place while the count is going on. The Chaos-Weaver opened the door exactly as wide as a slow cooker, and took it from her by the tea towel round the handles, and thanked her. She looked past him at Lyle, sitting against the back wall, and said, "Lyle, it's eleven o'clock," and Lyle said, "I know, Bonnie," and the Chaos-Weaver closed the door.

Nobody had entered. Nobody had left. The chili had.

The officials ate standing up, at the bar end, one at a time, so that the count could keep going. The chili was very good. Lyle watched them eat it. I watched him watch them eat it.

"It's not an inducement," Lyle said, to the Allfather. "Voting's over."

"I know," said the Allfather. He did not have any.

* * *

The double objection was at eighteen minutes past eleven.

It was a ballot with a clear X for mayor and six clear X's for council, and then, beside the question, an X in YES and an X

in NO, and the X in NO had been scribbled over, hard, with the pencil, in a sort of dark knot, as if someone had changed their mind and wanted to make sure the ballot knew.

The Allfather counted the marks.

"Question," he said. "Two marks for one answer. Rejected."

I stood up. Arnold stood up beside me. We had not looked at each other.

"I object," I said. "The NO's crossed out. It's a correction. The intent is YES."

"I object," said Arnold. "The scribble's a mark. It's two marks in NO and one in YES. If anything the intent is NO."

The Allfather looked at us both. At the back wall Tamsin Hiebert put her hand over her mouth.

"Two objections," said the Allfather. "Opposite grounds. Same ruling. Rejected. Both recorded."

He wrote them. Row three, row four, same time. Then he held the ballot a moment longer than he needed to, in the light, so that we could look at it again if we wanted. Neither of us did.

Arnold sat. I sat.

"Two marks in NO," I said, "is that a thing?"

"No," said Arnold. "But somebody stood in there and changed their mind about four point eight five million dollars. I wanted it written down that somebody noticed."

* * *

At ten to twelve the doorbell rang.

It rang behind the bar, on the wall beside the trophy case: the first four notes of "Für Elise," loud in that quiet room. Elaine

dropped a ballot. Merv said "Jesus." The candidates looked at the bar shutter. Tamsin said, "Is that somebody's phone?"

"It's the ice plant," I said. "It's head pressure."

Everybody looked at me.

"It's an alarm," I said. "He's on it."

"The ice plant plays Beethoven?" said Kaden.

"Only that one."

It did not ring again. Through the floor, after a moment, we heard the knock in the compressor change, the slow spoon on the pot. Then the fan came up, the big one, under us.

"How do you know that?" said Kaden.

"I went downstairs," I said.

Elaine picked up the ballot. Doug called it. It was a Pellerin-Ross.

* * *

Council finished at five past twelve.

Except that it didn't, because Rhoda's tally sheet and Bernice's disagreed by one, in the column for Abernathy.

They are sisters. They have done this together since Expo 86. And they disagreed by one, and each of them said quietly that it was the other one, and the Allfather said, "Retally the stack," and they did.

There are twenty-three stacks of fifty and one of twelve. They retallied Abernathy on all of them. It took twenty minutes. Kaden's phone died during it and he had to borrow Darcy's charger, which Darcy gave him without a word, which Kaden noted, and typed, on Darcy's charger.

Bernice was right. Rhoda had made a tick in Abernathy's box that belonged in Bains's, at about ten to ten, around the time of the stone.

"I was looking at the stone," said Rhoda.

"We were all looking at the stone," said Bernice, and fixed it.

* * *

The question took forty minutes. By then the room knew the motion: hold up, read, call, tick. There was only one thing to call. YES or NO.

"Yes."

"No."

"No."

"Yes."

"Yes."

At the back wall, Tamsin and Lyle had stopped watching. Lyle was asleep, sitting up, with his arms folded. Tamsin was on her phone, reading the Legion's numbers, which were not good for her. The question wasn't theirs. It was ours. Arnold and me.

I watched every one. Not like the Coquihalla.

The rink came up in Elaine's hand one thousand one hundred and sixty-two times. YES and NO. YES and NO. I was holding Arnold's thermos, I don't know why. It was empty.

At twelve-thirty-one Elaine held up a ballot from the set-aside pile with an X beside NO. It had wandered. Half of it was in the box and half of it was out, on the white, the way an X goes when somebody is marking a ballot with a stubby

pencil on a cardboard table at the end of a long day. It was a NO. There was nothing else it could have been.

Kaden stood up.

"Objection," he said. "It's outside the box."

"You're here for the candidates, Mr. Bhatt," said the Allfather. "The question has its own scrutineers."

Kaden sat down, slowly, the way you sit when you have just found out the chair was never yours.

The Allfather looked at me. I was the Scrutineer For. If anybody was going to object to that X, it was me.

I looked at the X. I thought about Appendix F, and Lionel Szabo, and the Thursday men's.

"It's a NO," I said. "Count it."

Kaden looked at me as if I had thrown his phone in the lake.

"Accepted," said the Allfather.

Arnold said nothing. But when my pen ran out at quarter to one he gave me his, and when I tried to give it back at the end of the night he would not take it.

* * *

At twelve-forty, from the bottom of the set-aside pile, Elaine held up a ballot that said, across the top, in block capitals, in pencil, above the word MAYOR:

GO DOLLY.

It had a clear X for mayor, six for council, and an X in YES.

Darcy stood up.

"Uniquely marked," he said. "It identifies the elector."

The Allfather held the ballot up a little higher, under the light, so we could all see it. Then he turned, slowly, so that it was facing the photograph over our chairs. Dolly Wiebe, 1967. The white cardigan, the crest, the broom across her body.

"The rule," said the Allfather, "is that a ballot is rejected if it's marked so that the voter could reasonably be identified." He looked at Darcy. "Who does it identify?"

Darcy opened his mouth. Nothing came out.

"Scrutineers," said the Allfather. "Who says this?"

"Everybody," I said. "The Tuesday league says it before the first end. The Thursday mixed. Half the spiel said it on the stairs today. It's on the back of the club jacket."

"Mr. Fehr?"

"Wednesday seniors too," said Arnold.

The Allfather put the ballot down on the YES pile. "Then it doesn't identify an elector," he said. "It identifies a building. Accepted."

"I object," said Darcy.

"Recorded," said the Allfather, and wrote it.

Darcy sat down. Then he said, to no one, "My mum says it," and Arnold said, "So does mine, and she's ninety-four," and nobody said anything else.

* * *

The question finished at five past one.

Rhoda and Bernice added it. They added it twice. They agreed both times. Rhoda read the mayor again first, with the set-aside pile in it now: Pellerin, five hundred and eighty-eight;

Hiebert, five hundred and forty-nine; rejected, twenty-five. Then she read the question to the Allfather, and he read it to the room.

"YES, five hundred and seventy-one. NO, five hundred and sixty-three. Rejected, twenty-eight."

Eight.

I didn't say anything. Kaden texted it to Trish, and I watched the three dots appear and disappear for a long time, and then Trish wrote back, *8???*, and then, *sheet 5 and 6 were 8*, and then, *I KNEW IT*, and then nothing.

Arnold leaned back in his chair and closed his eyes.

"It's just this room," he said.

"I know," I said.

"The Legion's seniors," said Arnold. "And there's the mail."

"I know."

"And the school."

"I know, Arnold."

Lyle Pellerin woke up at the back wall. He looked at the room. "Did I miss it?" he said.

"You won here," said Tamsin. "On mayor. By thirty-nine."

"Oh," said Lyle. He sat up. "The roof?"

"Yes by eight."

"Oh," said Lyle again. He looked down at the floor, toward the bucket you couldn't see, below us on sheet five. "Well," he said. "It does leak."

BALLOT ACCOUNT

BALLOT ACCOUNT

(Local Government Act, s. 141)

Voting Place: Dolly Wiebe Memorial Curling Centre (Upper Lounge) · General Voting Day

A. Ballots received by Presiding Election Official 1,500

B. Ballots issued to electors 1,163

C. Ballots spoiled and replaced 1

D. Ballots unused 336

Check: $B + C + D = A$ 1,500

E. Ballots counted (in ballot box) 1,162

F. Ballots issued but not in ballot box (B − E) 1

Signed: _____ Presiding Election Official

Candidate representatives and scrutineers present may sign.

The ballot account is the last thing.

It is one sheet of paper that says where every one of the fifteen hundred ballots that came into the room that morning, in their shrink wrap, went. Counted, in the box. Spoiled.

Unused, still in their pads. Add those up and it should come to fifteen hundred.

Elaine counted the unused. Three hundred and thirty-six. She counted them twice. Merv counted them a third time, because Elaine asked him to.

The Allfather added them up at the bar shutter, on the form, with a pencil. He did it without a calculator. He did it twice.

It came to fourteen hundred and ninety-nine.

* * *

The difference was one ballot. One thousand one hundred and sixty-three people had been ruled off the voters list as having been given a ballot. One thousand one hundred and sixty-two ballots had come out of the box. Either somebody had been handed a ballot and taken it into a compartment and looked out at the ice and not put it in the box, or somebody had drawn a ruler under the wrong name at half past six in the supper rush. The account does not have a line for which.

"Where is it?" said Kaden.

Nobody answered him.

"Can we find out who?"

"No," said the Allfather.

He did not explain.

He wrote *1* on the last line, the one for ballots issued but not in the box.

"Check the toques," said Doug.

We looked at him.

"Somebody folds it into their toque," said Doug. "Happened in Summerland."

So the Chaos-Weaver brought the HATS box out from behind the bar shutter, and Doug went through the four toques that nobody had claimed, one at a time, in front of everybody, the way you'd search a coat at a border. In the first there was nothing. In the second there was a Werther's Original, still wrapped. In the third there was a folded piece of paper, and the room stopped breathing, and Doug unfolded it under the light.

It was a meat draw ticket. Number 214.

Rhoda looked at it.

"That's a ham," she said. "He never came down for his ham."

The fourth toque had nothing in it. Doug put them all back in the box, and the ticket in with them, and the Werther's in his pocket.

* * *

There was also the spoiled ballot.

That one we knew about. It was on the account: *Ballots spoiled and replaced — 1*. At eight minutes to seven a man had come out of the second compartment with his folder and gone back to Bernice and said he'd made a mistake, could he have another one. Bernice had taken it from him, still folded, and written SPOILED across the outside of the folder in pen, and put it in the brown envelope for spoiled ballots without opening it, which is how it is done, and given him a new one. He had voted on the new one. The Allfather had initialled the envelope.

"What did he do?" said Kaden.

"I didn't look, dear," said Bernice. "You don't look."

"He'll have voted for seven," said Arnold. "For council. They see six and think it means at least six."

"He'll have put a stone," said Darcy.

"He'll have used ticks," said Kaden, "like my aunt."

"He'll have put YES," I said, "and then thought about the interest."

Arnold looked at me.

"I'm just saying it's possible," I said.

The brown envelope sat on the bar shutter with the Allfather's initials across the flap. Nobody was ever going to open it.

"So that's two we don't know," said Kaden. "The spoiled one and the gone one."

"Three," said Darcy. "You're forgetting the stone."

"The stone counted," said Kaden. "That's the one we do know."

* * *

While the Allfather finished the forms, the officials took down the compartments.

They are cardboard. They fold flat. Doug and Merv went along the window taking them down one at a time, and folding them, and stacking them on the table, and as each one came down I saw what had been behind it, which was the window, and the ice.

I had been watching the backs of those compartments since eight in the morning. I had watched a thousand and some

people go into them. I had never seen what they saw. I got up and went and stood where the third one had been.

From there you could see sheets three and four, and the far end of five, and the bucket. You could see the trophy case reflected faintly in the glass, and Dolly, and behind her, very small, yourself. You could see across the ice and out the end window to the corner, where the black garbage bag was on its sign.

Doug folded the last one and put it on the stack.

"Every year," he said, "somebody writes something on the inside of one of these."

"What?"

He turned it over to show me. On the inside of the cardboard, in pencil, small, at about the height you'd be standing if you were bent over a ballot, someone had written *ROOF LEAKS*.

He folded it back up.

"Every year it's something," said Doug.

* * *

The All-Seeing came at half past one.

He came up the stairs out of the rain, with his clipboard, to collect the box and the envelopes and the ballot account and take them to the chief election officer at the Township office. He stood at the bar shutter while the Allfather sealed the ballots in their envelopes, by pile, valid and rejected, and sealed the envelopes in the box, and put new seals on the box, and wrote the numbers down.

"One unaccounted," said the Allfather.

"One," said the All-Seeing. He did not sound surprised.

"Is that a lot?" I said.

He seemed to notice for the first time that I was there, at twenty to two in the morning, with a thermos.

"One in about a thousand and forty," he said. "Across the province. It moves a little from one election to the next. Not much. Somebody puts it in their coat. Somebody takes it home to think about it. Somebody's kid wants it. Somebody rules under the wrong name." He wrote something on his clipboard. "Somebody puts it in a hat."

"We checked the toques," said Doug.

"Ham," said Rhoda.

"So where's this one?"

"I don't know," said the All-Seeing.

He said it plainly, and went back to his clipboard.

I asked him the other thing then. I asked him and not Kaden, who had his phone back and charged, and Trish on the other end of it.

"How did the question go? Overall?"

"The Legion's still counting," said the All-Seeing. "They were two clerks short all afternoon. They're on a retally. The mail's in. The school's in."

"But how did it go?"

"It's within the number still out at the Legion," said the All-Seeing. "Either way."

"Which way?"

He studied his clipboard for some time.

"Questions like this go the way of the place the thing is," he said. "This room went yes. The Legion's the seniors. The school went no, by a lot." He tapped the clipboard with his pen. "It'll be close. Closer than this room. That's what I know."

"That's not an answer."

"No," said the All-Seeing. "The chief election officer declares it Wednesday."

* * *

We signed the ballot account. The Allfather signed it first, and then, because the form says we may, we signed under him. Arnold Fehr, scrutineer against. Lorna Petrasek, scrutineer for, with Arnold's pen. Kaden Bhatt, for Hiebert and six others. Darcy Lund, for Pellerin and six others. Darcy clicked his own pen first, which said LUND REALTY on the barrel, and the Allfather handed him a Township pencil without a word, and Darcy looked at it, and used it.

Kaden texted Trish, *signed*. Trish wrote back at once, *DID WE WIN*. Kaden looked at it for a while and wrote, *the room*.

The candidates didn't sign; there wasn't a line. They had gone home at quarter past one, separately, Tamsin first, Lyle five minutes after, so they wouldn't meet in the parking lot.

Then the All-Seeing took the box down the stairs, and the Allfather carried the canvas bag down after him, clinking, and the officials put on their coats, and Elaine took Velma Kowalski's tea cup off the windowsill and rinsed it at the urn and put it upside down on the officials' table on a paper towel. And then the Allfather came back up the stairs for the last time, and stood

at the top, and said, “Thank you all,” and turned the lights off at the switch by the door, one bank and then the other, so that the lounge was dark except for the light coming up through the windows from the ice.

* * *

Arnold and I went down together. The stairs were wet from all the coats. At the bottom the doors to the ice were still propped open with the rubber wedges.

The lights over the sheets were down to the night setting, one row in three. The bonspiel was long gone. The ice was clean and flat and empty, and on sheet five, under the place where the 1974 roof met the 1961 one, there was the bucket, and the Hand beside it with the scraper, in his black toque, looking up.

“It’s still raining,” said Arnold.

It was. You could hear it on the roof. You could hear the drip, too, if you knew to listen for it, into the bucket, every few seconds, and the knock in the compressor through the floor, not quite in time with it.

The Hand saw us. He lifted a hand. We lifted ours.

“Is it going to hold?” I said. “The plant?”

“Tonight,” he said.

Arnold held the door. We went out into the parking lot. The pink cloud was still on in the window of the vape shop. The light in the Golden Glow was off. Rob Takacs’s black garbage bag was still on his sign across the road, because nobody had told anybody they could take it off.

Halfway across the lot Arnold said, “Domicile.”

“What?”

“Eight letters. Ends in E.”

We walked a little further.

“I’m going to write to the Packet,” I said.

“Saying what?”

“That you read to Appendix E. And that you’re against the interest rate, and why.”

He thought about it.

“Spell it F-E-H-R,” he said. “They always put an A in.”

My car was at one end of the lot and Arnold’s was at the other, because we had both got there early.

“Wednesday,” said Arnold.

“Wednesday,” I said.