

# The Last Crossing

by Elias Winterbourne

The river was wider than Daniel had imagined, its surface dark and rippling beneath the pale moonlight. He stood at the edge of the dock, the worn planks creaking beneath his weight. Somewhere across the water, the cabin waited—if it still stood at all.

He clutched the leather satchel tighter, the edges of the manuscript inside pressing against his palm. The pages felt heavier than paper should, burdened by the words that filled them. Words that didn't belong to him.

The boat rocked as he stepped inside, the oars creaking in their locks. He pushed off, the river swallowing the sound. It had been three days since the call, three days since he'd heard the voice on the other end whisper the name of the man he'd been searching for—Martin Hale.

Martin's disappearance had been sudden, his final book left unfinished. No one knew why he had fled to the wilderness, cutting ties with the world that had once celebrated him. But Daniel had read the pages Martin left behind, and he knew the truth was buried in them.

The oars dipped into the water, each stroke pulling him closer to the cabin and the secrets it held. Daniel's breath hung in the air, the cold tightening its grip as the trees on the far shore came into view.

The cabin was there, barely visible between the branches. A light flickered in the window.

Daniel's pulse quickened. He hadn't expected anyone to be here—not after all this time. He hesitated, the boat rocking beneath him.

But the river had carried him this far. There was no turning back now.