

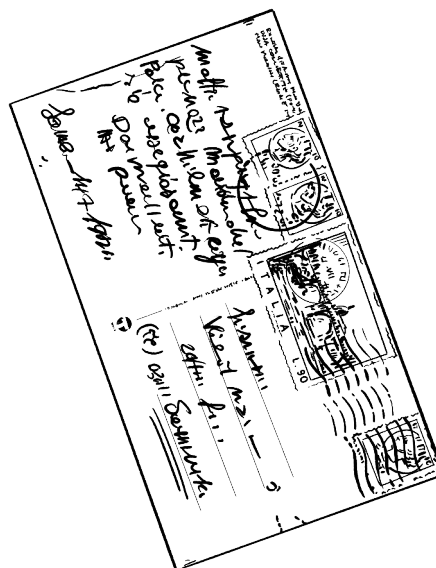
## I. A seashell

**Signal:** I can still picture your face, smiling and sunburnt. You'd spent weeks saving up money for that trip, but we were together, sitting on the beach barefoot, admiring the seemingly endless expanse of water. We laughed and joked around, played with the wet sand, made castles out of seashells. But above everything else, I remember your watery eyes and the tear running down your cheek, as for the first time in your life you looked upon the Sea, so beautiful it hurt to watch.



## II. A postcard

**Signal:** When I knew you were away, I waited anxiously for the doorbell to ring. I tumbled down the stairs and almost tore your postcards from the mail man's hands, looking for your unmistakable penmanship. You always had a gift for picking the best landscape, the most breathtaking view: You tireless wanderer, you had us all green with envy with how good you were at escaping the grey of everyday life! And how I loved being able to hold you, when you finally came home with a suitcase full of stories.





## I. A toy gun

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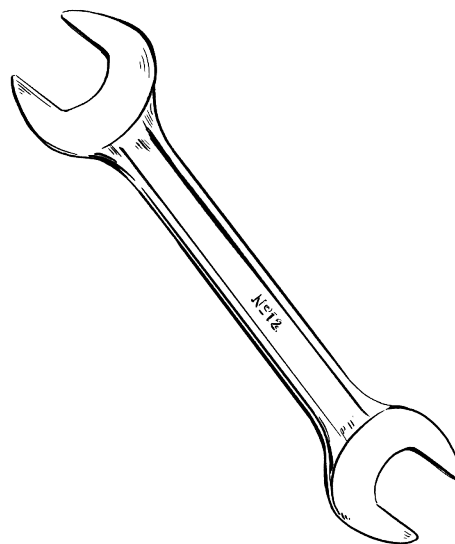
**Signal:** The weight of this toy feels so familiar. It was your most sacred childhood treasure. I remember the tales of imaginary battles, where good always triumphed over evil thanks to your secret weapon. Things were so simple back then. Even as an adult, when you spoke about war, you were positive we could go back to that simplicity: Good on one side and evil on the other. I still remember your smile. I always thought you were really on the side of good. After all, who else could be but you?



## II. A wrench

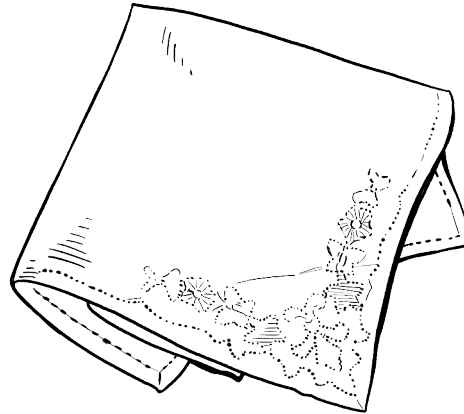
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**Signal:** Who else would hang a wrench above their mantelpiece? When people asked you about it, you always had the same answer: «A man can only call himself that when he knows what it feels like to work in a factory from dusk till dawn». I know how much it cost you to drop out of school, as well as I know that you had no other choice. Now I find myself contemplating this lump of metal and I think I need to thank it for everything it taught you. For helping make you the man you are. The man you were to me.



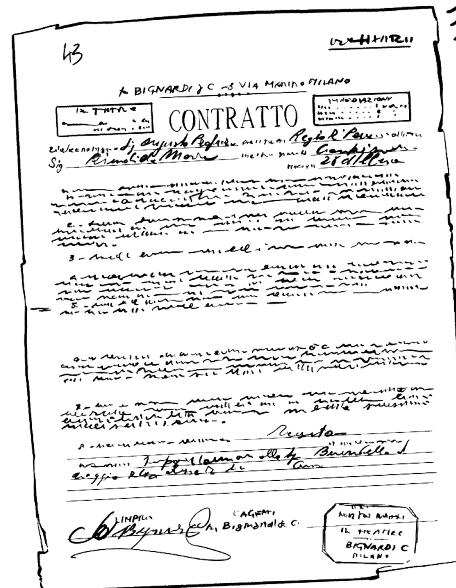
### III. A fancy handkerchief \_ \_ \_

**Signal:** Such a dainty handkerchief in such strong, manly hands. It would have been a funny sight, were it not for the reverence you treated it with. Not everyone understood, though, and I remember the fear on a friend's face after he'd teased you. He'd riled you up for once. But what moves me still is the thought of that dreadful day, where I sobbed so much I thought nothing would ever console me again. Until you gave me your precious handkerchief, to wipe the tears and sweat away. Who's going to comfort me now that you're gone?



### IV. A private agreement \_ \_ \_

**Signal:** A legal document: a contract, no, a private agreement. An old money matter of no importance. I was about to throw it away, then I read the names and I remembered. You were always so stubborn when you thought you were in the right. So, basically, always. To bring peace to what had been a pair of close friends you'd taken on the debt one owed to the other. You did that without anyone asking you to. Without asking for anything in return. I remember when I asked you why, you simply answered: «It was the only thing to do».



## I. A magician's coin

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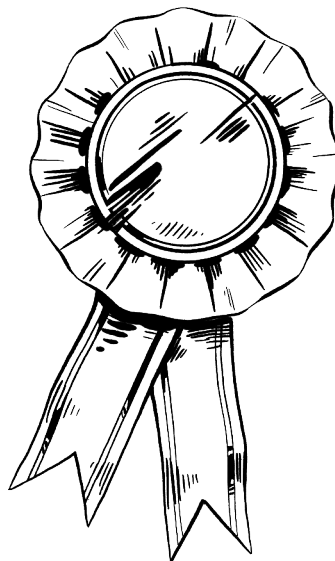
**Signal:** One of the things I always liked about you was how you looked at the world with a child's eyes. Sure, you'd grown up and become the man everyone knows, but you were always a little kid at heart. I remember your magic tricks so well: Children were your favourite audience. You played around with that coin between your fingers and then made it disappear with all the mastery of a true artist; you brought it close to their heads and voilà, pulled it right out of their ear. They always broke out in giggles, and you laughed right along with them.



## II. A sports medal

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**Signal:** Everyone wants to be a champion as a kid. No exceptions. Then we grow up: Other worries come along, and dreams fade away like mist in the wind. But you always paraded this around with so much pride: The junior championship medal you won as a teenager. It's a worthless hunk of tin, the only thing that made it shine was your smile. The one you had when you held it in your hand and got lost in contemplation, once again recalling your small, great moment of glory. Pity it didn't bring you any luck when you needed it most.





### III. A broken watch

**Signal:** «I really ought to get it fixed», I heard you say that so many times. You were talking about your faulty watch and the town's old clockmaker, now retired. Yet you never got around to it, until the war came and there was no more time left. It marched on, even when the hands of your watch missed a minute or two. Nobody ever fixed it and I wonder why you always forgot this one thing, when you never left anything else unfinished. I guess I should accept that I will never get an answer, now.



### IV. A badge of honour

**Signal:** What's the use of a badge for those of us who stayed back, when it means that you're gone? Without even a body, a chest, a uniform to pin it to. But this is a true medal, sure, one earned on the field. A testament to your "military valour, for leading his troops with courage and loyalty, and making the ultimate sacrifice". You, the officer, the hero, the casualty. Every hour in the day, the light steals a gleam from the metal. I don't even polish it. Every time I look at it, it's your smile that's shining back at me.



## I. A stage play

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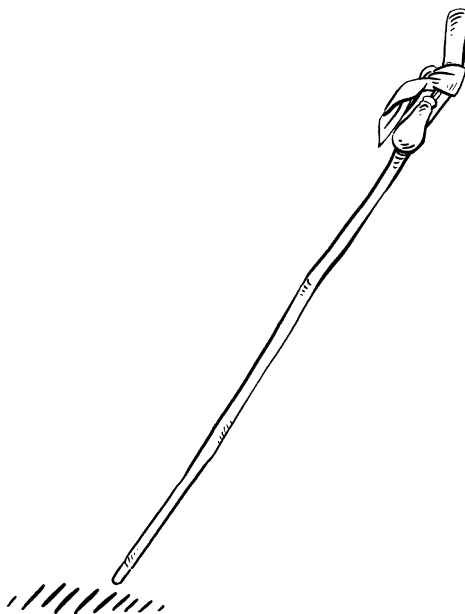
**Signal:** I remember your warm voice cracking out jokes, with the ease I always envied so much: «I am against long engagements: They give people the opportunity of finding out each other's character before marriage, which is never advisable». That evening you got all the applause: How I loved not having a care in the world, how I loved laughing along! Back then, no one could take seriously the joke you cracked out at the end: «Have you ever noticed? Death is childless, that's why it wants our children from us».



## II. A walking stick

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**Signal:** You were always a hard man to pin down, filled to the brim nuance and contradiction. But never have I felt closer to understanding you than the times we went out walking on that winding mountain path, with the sun beating down on us and our steps mixing with the hum of cicadas. You were always quite the wordsmith, yet in those moments you found yourself quiet, enjoying the effort of walking. And I bursted with pride at being there with you, sharing a leg of your journey.



### III. An engagement ring

**Signal:** After the speech that made war a reality, everyone looked at you. A young lad stepped forward: «The order's issued, I'm leaving tomorrow. I'll be on the front lines». He put a small shiny ring in your hands: «I'm not afraid to die, just to lose it. It's such a nice ring, and I don't have the guts to give it to her yet». I don't know what you talked about after you took him aside, I just know that the young lad returned from war and instead of giving the ring to his girlfriend, he wanted me to have it. To remember you by. He called you «My guardian angel».



### IV. A Bible

**Signal:** I never picture you in a uniform, the same as everyone else. Not as a soldier, nor as a minister. But I remember your badge: that small old Bible. You were always reading it. We discussed it often, no sermons. You just shared what you loved. Was it hard to leave it with that wounded soldier, so that he'd have something to hold on to in the hospital? He made it through, came back, and returned it. I wonder if it was your farewell gift, if you already knew what would happen. I wonder if you were right and now you're watching from above.

