It seems to me now that Fanshawe was always there. He is the place where everything begins for me, and without him I would hardly know who I am. We met before we could talk, babies crawling through the grass in diapers, and by the time we were seven we had pricked our fingers with pins and made ourselves blood brothers for life. Whenever I think of my childhood now, I see Fanshawe. He was the one who was with me, the one who shared my thoughts, the one I saw whenever I looked up from myself.

But that was a long time ago.

We grew up, went off to different places, drifted apart. None of that is very strange, I think. Our lives carry us along in ways we cannot control, and almost nothing stays with us. It dies when we do, and death is something that happens to us every day.

Seven years ago this November, I received a letter from a woman named Sophie Fanshawe. “You don’t know me,” the letter began, “and I apologize for writing to you like this out of the blue. But things have happened, and under the circumstances I don’t have much choice.” It turned out that she was Fanshawe’s wife. She knew that I had grown up with her husband, and she also knew that I lived in New York, since she had read many of the articles I had published in magazines.

The explanation came in the second paragraph, very bluntly, without any preamble. Fanshawe had disappeared, she wrote, and it was more than six months since

En noviembre hará siete años que recibí una carta de una mujer llamada Sophie Fanshawe. «Usted no me conoce», comenzaba la carta, «y le pido disculpas por escribirle tan inesperadamente. Pero algo ha ocurrido, y dadas las circunstancias no tengo opción.» Resultó ser la esposa de Fanshawe. Ella sabía que yo había crecido junto a su esposo, y también que yo vivía en New York, ya que había leído muchos de mis artículos publicados en revistas.

Lo explicaba todo en el segundo párrafo, de modo brusco y sin preámbulos. Decía que Fanshawe había desaparecido, y que ya habían pasado más de seis meses desde la última vez
she had last seen him. Not a word in all that time, not the slightest clue as to where he might be. The police had found no trace of him, and the private detective she hired to look for him had come up empty-handed. Nothing was sure, but the facts seemed to speak for themselves: Fanshawe was probably dead; it was pointless to think he would be coming back. In the light of all this, there was something important she needed to discuss with me, and she wondered if I would agree to see her.

que lo había visto. Hasta ese momento no había recibido ni una palabra, ni siquiera una pista de dónde podría estar. La policía no había encontrado rastro alguno, y el detective privado que ella había contratado también había terminado con las manos vacías. Todavía no era seguro, pero las pruebas hablaban por sí solas: era muy probable que Fanshawe estuviera muerto; no tenía sentido pensar que él regresaría. En vista de todo esto, necesitaba hablar conmigo de algo importante, y quería saber si yo aceptaría reunirme con ella.